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MASTERPIECES OF INDIAN TEXTILES

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Masterpieces of

INDIAN

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Introduction by
RUSTAM J. MEHTA

TEXTILES

HAND SPUN–HAND WOVEN–TRADITIONAL

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A Survey of India's Traditional Fabrics and Textile Crafts

'The muslins and brocades that delighted the fashionable Roman ladies in the time of Caesar are still woven as a hereditary craft. The textiles that once travelled along ancient caravan routes to the markets of the Middle East and Europe are still yours for the asking.'[1]

I

OF ALL the art-crafts of India,[2] her traditional hand spun and hand woven textiles are probably the oldest, as the finds of fragments of finely woven and madder-dyed cotton fabrics and shuttles at Mohenjo-Daro of the Indus Valley Civilisation of the 3rd millennium B.C. go to prove. Perhaps hand spinning and weaving were the earliest known crafts in the whole of the ancient Eastern world. As Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya believes, 'Undoubtedly the Orient has been the home of the carpet. For weaving itself is of very great antiquity and claims to belong to the early youth of the human race. . . . Man seems to have succeeded in learning to embellish his person as well as his surroundings with beautiful things from his earliest days. Thus weaving developed back in the dim hoary past and as time went on continued to be practised with great technical ingenuity and fine artistic skill. The Oriental specialised in some fabulous weaves that soon came to be greatly sought after, and dangers were braved, hazardous adventures risked, to acquire these luxurious articles of the East. The trade routes, East to West, along which traders moved, carried many lovely patterns of weave and embroidery.'[3]

The rich and beautiful products of the weavers of India have been rightly called 'exquisite poetry in colourful fabrics.' It is said that there was no trick of the weaver's art and trade that was unknown to them. Perhaps India was the

[1] *Shopping in India*, 1966.
[2] Here India is taken in the sense of the undivided India of pre-partition days.
[3] Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, *Carpets and Floor Coverings of India*, 1969.

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first country in the whole wide world to have perfected the art-craft of weaving. Maybe her gossamer-like muslins and rich sumptuous brocades glittering with gold thread are older even than the Code of Manu. There can be no doubt that as K. de B. Codrington has pointed out, since very early times India has been a very important centre for the allied and linked crafts of spinning, weaving, and dyeing.

In one of the hymns of the Rig Veda there are subtle references to the technique of weaving. Agni, the god of Fire, declares in the language of the loom: 'Oh, I know not either warp or woof, I know not the web of thy weave.' And again, we read of Usha, the goddess of the Dawn, as being 'clothed with radiance'; another Vedic hymn tells how 'Day and night spread light and darkness over the extended world like two famous female weavers weaving a garment.'

The Code of Manu also makes frequent references to the crafts of weaving and dyeing. By the time of the Epics, the art and technique of the loom must certainly have reached a high stage of perfection. In the two great classics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana,* woven cotton, silk, and woollen fabrics are frequently mentioned, 'Gems and gold and costly garments, slaves and damsels passing fair.' Here are references to the Hiranyadrapi, the shining golden cloak, and the Manichira, which as far as is known was a South Indian fabric with a fringe of woven pearls. However, according to some recent authorities, the reference to the former can be dated to the Rigvedic period.

The *Ramayana* lists the wedding gifts presented to Sita by her father Janaka—fine silken clothes in various colours, furs and woollen garments, and precious stones. The *Mahabharata* speaks of the presents brought to king Yudhishthira by the feudal princes—woollen shawls of the Abhiras of Gujarat, furs from the Hindu Kush, tribal fabrics of woven plant fibres from the North-Western Himalayas, cloths from the wool of sheep and goats, and even fine muslins, a tribute from the people of the Karnatak and Mysore regions.

The temple sculptures of ancient times feature women garbed in brocaded clothes, embroidered fabrics and muslins so fine as to delineate only the subtle curves of their bodies. By a form of artistic licence, only the edges or the folds of the covering garments are depicted to show that the female forms are truly and fully clothed in the finest muslins. One such example is the female figure from the Rajmahals in Bihar, now in the Patna Museum.[1] Belonging to the 6th-7th century A.D., it is carved in very deep relief within a panel bordered on the sides with rosettes. The delineation in stone of the filmy lower garment of the figure is characteristic. The diaphanous 'skirt' has been chiselled with great delicacy, with emphasis laid only on the lower hem. The upper part of the body is supposedly bare as no attempt has been made to depict the folds or edges of any covering garment.

[1] Rustam J. Mehta, *Masterpieces of Indian Sculpture,* Pl. 25.

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The magnificent frescoes of the Ajanta cave complex reveal many kinds of garments, both male and female, mostly in shades of blue, a colour apparently very popular with the Hindus, for have not their poets sung so charmingly of the beauty of a pale-face damsel dressed all in blue as being like 'a dark cloud lighted up by the radiant fire of beauty'? In these frescoes, as also in those of the Bagh caves, there are further signs of many different kinds of weaves and textiles—fabrics like the Bandhani, figured muslins, and rich brocades. Revealed here are garments with stripes and circles, checks and chevrons, and other geometrical patterns; even conventionalised floral motifs and intertwining scrolls with birds and beasts. As Bana sings of Parvati's dress, her two silken 'garments were as the foam of ambrosia with a pair of geese in yellow on the hem.' How exquisitely Kalidasa describes it: 'How shall I praise thy robe with gay flamingoes gleaming?' Birds, and especially geese, are popular and common motifs seen on the garments of the figures on the walls of Ajanta, particularly in Caves I and II.

'A woman, though endowed with youth and beauty and adorned with golden necklaces and betel leaves and flowers, does not go out to meet her lover in a secret place until she has put on a pair of silken cloths, so the whole of the region of the earth is adorned by the silk weavers as if with a garment of silk, agreeable to the touch, variegated in colours, pleasing to the eye . . .' Thus we read on a memorial inscription of the early fifth century, dedicating a temple to the Sun-god Surya, built in Malwa by a guild of weavers in silk.

Megasthenes (c. 302—298 B.C.), the Seleucid envoy at the court of Chandragupta Maurya, has left us a detailed account of the country of the time and how the Indians of those days were garbed in the finest flowered muslins and the rich and ruling classes in long robes magnificently embroidered in gold thread. 'They love finery and ornaments,' he wrote; 'They wore dresses worked in gold, adorned with precious stones, and also flowered robes of fine muslin.'

The years rolled by. Muhmad Tughlaq in the 14th century employed at Delhi over 500 expert weavers to weave silk and gold brocades to be presented as gifts and for the ladies of the royal court. It is said that so beautiful were these fabrics, so great was their reputation, that even the finest output of Europe, Persia, and China, paled before them. Could it be that the beautiful fabrics of Babylon, deftly embroidered in gold and colour, really originated in this country? And so also the golden veil of Hephaestes described by Homer? The veil,

> 'Whose texture e'en the search of gods deceives,
> Fine as the filmy webs the spider weaves.'

And today, there is perhaps hardly a village in this vast subcontinent where there is no colony of caste weavers, each member sitting beside his simple loom, weaving out the traditional beauty of India's own precious heritage.

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Year after year the craft of the hand-loom is slowly dying out, unable to compete economically with advancing technology and the high speed of power-looms from which gush out thousands of yards of fabrics, day after day, to clothe the poor and the rich alike. But now and then one still comes across the beautiful textiles of old, the lovely traditional designs that can soothe and excite, art-fabrics for the discerning few.

In India, textiles for the person are not always concerned with prevailing fashions, believes Pupul Jayakar. Rather, she feels, clothes form the very being of the Indian's rather complex ritual life, the surroundings in which he has been born and bred, and from which he ultimately departs.

II

THE WONDERFUL HAND WOVEN COTTON FABRICS OF INDIA

IF THE hand spun and hand woven cotton textiles of India have achieved great popularity, both at home and abroad, it is richly deserved. They have always been in great demand and in the past were exported to the far corners of the then known world.

None among the wonderful cotton fabrics was more famous than the exquisite closely woven muslin with such graphically descriptive and poetic names as Abrawan or Ab-i-Rawan (running water), Bafthawa or Bafthma (woven air), Sharbati (sweet as sherbat), and Shabnam (evening dew)—names so sweet sounding and so apt of the loveliness of the warp and woof that went to make India's Mulmul Khas—'King's Muslin.'

It is said that so filmy-fine were the muslins of old India that they could be almost invisible, as the Ab-i-Rawan was when under water—and thereby hangs a tale. The apocryphal story runs that Princess Zeb-un-Nissa was one day observed by her puritanical father Emperor Aurangzeb apparently clad in nothing. On being severely reprimanded for desecrating the high dignity of the royal court, the princess calmly replied that she was fully clad; she had on not one but seven Jamahs (dresses) covering her slim body! Such was the fineness of the famous muslins of Dacca that the Shabnam became invisible to the eye when laid on wet grass—hence its descriptive name of 'evening dew.'

Alas, the wonderful muslins of Dacca are now a thing of the past. However, a small quantity of muslins is still being produced today at Varanasi, Jaipur, Hyderabad, Gwalior, Indore, Madurai, and Tanjore. Mention may also be made of the Dorias or striped muslins of Dacca, Gwalior, Nagpur, and Hyderabad, and the Charkana or chequered muslins of Nellore and other places. Then there

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are the embroidered muslins or Chikan of Uttar Pradesh, the printed muslins of Tiruchirapalli, the flowered muslins with floral sprays worked on them with an unrivalled deftness of touch, and the muslins from Gujarat and the Deccan plateau printed in gold and silver. The latter are produced by stamping the design on the cloth with gum; the gold and silver leaf is then laid on where it adheres to the design only. Allowed to dry, the residual metallic leaf not adhering to the background area is carefully brushed away.

Considering the fineness of the old muslins of Dacca, masterpieces of the spinner's and weaver's art, it goes without saying that the hand spun yarn used would also have to be of utter fineness. Dr. James Taylor has recorded: 'A skein which a Native weaver measured in my presence, in 1846, and which was carefully weighed afterwards, proved to be in the proportion of upwards of 250 miles to the pound.' The greater the length and the lower the weight, the better the fabric was considered to be.

As Sir George Watt has pointed out, the commonest method of testing the fineness of the muslin was to determine if the piece of woven cloth could be passed through a lady's finger ring. In the time of Emperor Jahangir, muslins fifteen yards in length and one yard in width could be made so fine as to weigh a mere 900 grains. The famous Mulmul Khas, in lengths of ten yards and one yard in width, could comprise from 1,000 to 1,800 threads in the warp. Naturally thread of so fine a count could only be spun and woven during the rains, to prevent the thread from snapping when being woven. It would take an expert weaver nearly five months to weave a piece of the above mentioned size. How truly has Dr. J. F. Watson said: 'With all our machinery and wondrous appliances we hitherto have been unable to produce a fabric which for fineness and utility can equal the woven air of Decca.'

Of all the art textiles of Dacca, now in Pakistan, the most beautiful, the most important, is the Jamdani or figured muslin. 'From their complicated designs they have always constituted the most expensive production of the Dacca loom' (Watson). Exquisite in look, no wonder the Jamdanis of old are today considered the prized heirlooms of many a Bengali family.

The Jamdani may be called a product of the loom and the shuttle, to which however the design motifs are added by hand during the course of the weaving, thus resulting in an embroidery effect. The method of production is somewhat similar to tapestry work, in that small shuttles filled with coloured, gold or silver thread, are passed through the warp as required during the actual weaving of the basic fabric. Paper patterns are generally used, as a rule two weavers sitting at the same loom to save time and simplify the intricacy of the weaving process.

The weaving of the Jamdani naturally requires not only skill but unlimited patience as well. Though fascinating and lovely the fabrics the weavers weave, their looms are simple, almost primitive. The weaving of the Jamdani has been

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thus described: 'The long warp threads being arranged, the weaving is begun as in the case of an ordinary cloth, and a pattern of the embroidery drawn on paper is pinned beneath as the weaving goes on. The workman continually raises the paper pattern to ascertain if his woof has approached closely to where any flower or other figure has to be embroidered, and when the exact place is reached, he takes his needle—a bamboo splinter, and as each woof thread passes through the pattern, he sews down the intersected portion of it, and so continues until it is completed.' When the embroidered design is familiar to the weaver and is of a continuous and regular nature, the paper pattern may be dispensed with, if the craftsman is sufficiently skilled.

No wonder the Jamdani, the most fabulous creation of the looms of Dacca and one of the most expensive, should be among the best cherished of the Bengali lady's possessions, mostly worn on marriage and festive occasions. Old Jamdanis are not common. During the time of the Moguls, its manufacture, at least of the finest type, was not freely allowed, unless produced under royal orders. It is said that weavers were strictly forbidden, under severe penalties, both financial and physical, to sell a Jamdani at a price exceeding the fixed limit.

The fabric is most often in grey cotton with the designs either in a bluish black, gorgeous colours, or in gold or silver thread. In the case of a sari, the field may have small floral sprays scattered all over (Buttidar) or in diagonal rows (Tirchha), with large and bold motives in the corners, generally variations of the shawl or cone patterns. Sometimes, the floral motifs may form a regular network (Jhalar); but perhaps the most attractive of the figured muslins is the Panna Hazara—'a thousand emeralds.' Here the floral sprays present to the eye the effect of thousands of scintillating jewels set in glimmering silver or gold.

It used to be once believed that the designs most commonly seen in these beautiful Jamdanis were of Persian origin. But this is hard to accept when one bears in mind that figured and flowered muslins were in common use in Bengal at a time when the Seleucid envoy Megasthenes lived at the imperial court of Chandragupta Maurya. Even if some of the designs could be presumed to have a foreign origin, the weaving of the figured Jamdani could be nothing but a purely indigenous art-craft.

It is necessary to make a mention also of the Jamdani embroidered during the process of weaving with floss silks of bright hues, blue, purple, scarlet, green, and even gold. The most popular design motif consists of large rosettes set in the interspaces of a diaper in bright green. Colourful such fabrics certainly are, but generally in poor taste. The cheaper Jamdanis, mostly in white, may be decorated in yellow, red, blue, or black cotton to form heavy and wavy designs. Or the basic fabric may be in black with large patterns in white, yellow, orange, or green. Instead of silk, coloured cotton thread may be used for the embroidery, when the fabric goes by the name of Chikan-dozi. The Chanderi muslins with floral borders

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in coloured silks and gold also deserve a mention as do the chequered and figured muslins of Gwalior, double-woven to produce different colours on each side of the fabric. Subtle in colouring and of the finest texture, the design motifs gleam like encrusted gold.

Beautiful figured muslins used to be and still are produced in many parts of India, but one of the most curious was a peculiar kind made in certain parts of the old State of Oudh. Sir George Birdwood described it thus: 'The weavers have a curious art of inweaving in it, at the time of manufacture, any design that may be suggested to them. Verses and sentences are most common, and these are varied to suit every taste and creed. Some are passages from the Koran, others from the Vedas, and others from Watt's moral songs and hymns.'[1]

III

SHIMMERING SILKS AND BRILLIANT BROCADES

INDIA'S 'fabric of dreams' is of course the Banarasi brocade, known as Kinkhab, but often misspelt in the past by European writers as Kincob. With its interweaving of coloured silk and gold threads, to form the most attractive floral designs, the brocades are without doubt India's most gorgeous, most fascinating, of silken fabrics.

It is said that when the Buddha attained Nirvana, his mortal remains were wrapped in a Banarasi material that radiated dazzling lights of yellow, red, and blue colours. Banarasi fabrics are also mentioned in the Buddhist text, the *Majjhimanikaya*. Although the brocades of Banaras (called Varanasi today) are the most famous and most sought after, they are also produced in Ahmadabad, Aurangabad, Delhi, Lucknow, Bhopal, Murshidabad, Thanjavur (Tanjore), Tiruchirapalli, Madras, and Surat. As a matter of fact, the exquisite piece of brocade presented to Queen Elizabeth II during her visit to India in 1962, was woven by the master-weavers of Surat. But all said and done, the spiritual home of Indian brocades remains Varanasi. Oudh's speciality was the weaving of brocades with verses from the Hindu scriptures or the Koran interwoven, thus making them especially appropriate and suitable for religious observances.

The brocades of India must certainly be of very ancient lineage, both the golden Soneri, often with a richly coloured border, and the Ruperi, made with silver thread intermingled with coloured silk. There is a hint of them in the Yajur Veda. And it was perhaps 'in the borrowed glory of this fabric that Herod was arrayed when, enthroned before the people, in full blaze of the sun, they hailed him as a god.'[2]

[1] Sir George Birdwood, *The Industrial Arts of India*, 1880.

[2] Josephus, *Antiquities*.

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The Indian Kinkhab is literally a 'cloth of gold.' In the days gone by, gold and silver wires of such extreme fineness were drawn that the whole fabric could be woven from them, without any other kind of thread, literally glittering with the metallic sheen of its warp and woof. The use of silk, or a mixture of silk and cotton, in the weaving of the brocade seems to have been a fairly recent innovation. Delicate designs are created by the use of warp and weft threads of different colours. The Amrus of Hyderabad are pure silk brocades, while the Himrus are brocaded silks with an admixture of cotton or woollen thread. But in the true Kinkhab, gold and silver threads are introduced as special weft threads or as a special weft together with the silk.

Of the three most popular designs of Indian Kinkhabs, the Shikarghar is certainly the finest and probably the most popular. In this, hunting scenes form dominant motifs. It almost seems as if Homer was referring in his *Odyssey* to the Shikarghar brocade of Varanasi in describing the rich robe of Ullysses:

'In ample mode
A robe of military purple flow'd
O'er all his frame; illustrious on his breast
The double-clasping gold the King confest.
In the rich woof a hound, mosaic drawn,
Bore on full stretch, and seized a dappled fawn;
Deep in his neck his fangs indent their hold;
They pant and struggle in the moving gold.
Fine as a filmy web beneath it shone
A vest, that dazzled like a cloudless sun.
The female train who round him throng'd to gaze,
In silent wonder, sigh'd unwilling praise.'

Referring to the above Sir George Birdwood says, 'When this passage is read with others in Homer, proof is added to proof of the traditional descent of the Kincobs of Benares, through the looms of Babylon and Tyre and Alexandria, from designs and technical methods which probably, in prehistoric times, originated in India itself, and were known by the Hindus already in the times of the Code of Manu, and before the date of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata.*'

Among Indian brocades the Buttidar consists of a design of Buttis or sprigs; the Beldar is made up of scroll motifs, perhaps the most traditional as it is seen depicted in the frescoes of Ajanta. Flowers, birds, especially the swan, and the Kalka or flame are other common design motifs of Banaras brocades.

Like India's Jamdanis of old, her brocades also are distinguished by apt names of poetic fancy, like Chand-tara (moon and stars) covered all over with scattered heavenly bodies. Is the Chand-tara also so old that it made Athenaeus

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PLATE A

SKIRT IN PHULKARI WORK FROM AMRITSAR, PUNJAB

EMBROIDERED SKIRT FROM GUJARAT

(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. XV)

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describe in A.D. 230 the cloak worn by Demetrius as a representation of the heavens, figuring the signs of the zodiac and the multitudinous stars all woven in gold? However, in this reference by Sir George Birdwood it is not quite clear whom he is actually referring to as Athenaeus and Demetrius. Then there is the Dhupchhaon (sunshine and shade), Mazchar (ripples of silver), Morgala (peacock's neck), and Bulbul-chasm (nightingale's eyes).

Sir George Watt has vividly described the exquisite brocades exhibited at the Delhi Exhibition of 1902-03. The following few descriptive examples of India's richest fabric present a vivid picture of their breathtaking splendour in gold and silver and colourful silks, cunningly interwoven by the deft fingers of the master-weavers of old India:

'. . . woven in gold with an elaborate and minute pattern in pale coloured silk. The stalks and foliage of the scroll are in dull metallic green. The flowers are composite, each floret outlined in gold. There is first one large flower in pale pink alternately inverted, and between two of these are ten similarly formed but smaller flowers in two or three shades of pale yellow, blue and brown.'

'. . . the material is a pale neutral yellow with a conventional design of the poppy worked all over it. The leaves are in silver, the flowers in gold and the stems in black silks.'

'. . . a sari in dull yellow silk gauze with closely compacted *tercha* floral scrolls, the borders and end-pieces being in thick silver checkered damask, demarcated by narrow red lines which are broken up by gold spots—perhaps the most beautiful sari in the Exhibition.'

'. . . a cotton sari, dark blue with border in gold, the scrolls being in metallic blue acutely bent and interlaced with a green scroll, the latter having pink and orange flowers. The end-piece is a plain gold panel surrounded by the bordering.'

'. . . the body is terracotta silk gauze striped with gold. The end-piece consists of gold check with a glowing scroll worked in the most delicate green, red and blue.'

Generally speaking, the Kinkhabs can be of four types: 1, the pure 'cloth of gold' or 'cloth of silver'; 2, brocades in which the gold or silver thread plays the most important part, with coloured silks interwoven here and there to emphasise the design. These are the true Kinkhabs of India, perhaps too heavy for making personal garments, but very suitable as wall hangings, caparisons, and curtains for palatial establishments; 3, the Baftas or Pot-thans that are mostly of closely woven coloured silks, with only selected parts of the design in gold or silver thread; 4, lastly, there are the lightest of the brocades or silk muslins with very little metallic thread, or with golden borders and end-pieces sewn on to them.

An understanding of the traditional mode of in-weaving of the brocades is essential for an appreciation of their true worth and value and the skill underlying the weave.

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In the making of the better class of brocades, a loom more elaborate and sophisticated than that required for plain silk weaving is necessary. The Naksha ('map' of the pattern), which is a kind of inverted heddles, is suspended above the warp and close to the usual heddle, the other ends of the cords being tied to a horizontal beam running below the warp. The strings of the Naksha have loops where they cross the warp and through which certain of the warp threads are passed. But unlike the common loom in which the up-and-down motion is imparted by treadles pressed by the weaver's foot in rhythm, the special Naksha is worked from the top by a young boy seated on a rude bench situated over the weaver's head. The bar of wood held by the child is given a twist to pull up the cords attached to the warp, according to the pattern woven and which threads are to appear on the surface of the weft at any time. Sitting at the head of his loom, the weaver produces variety in the design by introducing silks of varied colours into the woof, together with the thread of gold or silver as his young apprentice watches—'and thus the vision grows in the sight of the young child seated aloft.'

An inferior type of Indian brocade is the Himru, a speciality of Hyderabad and Aurangabad, in which both silk and cotton yarn is used to produce variegated designs, woven on the principle of extra weft figuring. Although considered inferior in quality, the Himru can be very pretty, with a pseudo-rich effect in general. It continued to be in popular demand, especially on account of its low price as compared to the pure silk brocade. Another point in its favour is that it can be woven very fine so as to give it a soft feel, thus making it more suitable as a fabric for personal wear than the true brocade—usually stiff and unyielding.

Today, the Himrus are chiefly used for blouses and cholies, dress material for the Western fashion world, and as furnishing fabrics for the home. Actually one of the rooms in Rashtrapati Bhavan, the official residence of the President of India, has been decorated entirely with the Himrus of Hyderabad.

It is presumed that it was Muhammad Tughlaq who settled skilled weavers of Varanasi and Ahmadabad at Aurangabad, thus founding the Himrus industry in the area.

In the past, two varieties of the Himrus were best known, the Gulbadan and the Shah Muhammad. In both these qualities the warps were printed by means of a resist technique, not unlike the Javanese Batik, the warp threads being dyed only with vegetable dyes, the most popular colours being green, saffron, crimson, and violet.

Among the mixed fabrics may also be mentioned the Sangi, produced chiefly at Allahabad, Azamgarh, and a few other places. It is so woven as to create a wavy Khanjari pattern on the surface of the fabric and made to look like embroidery. The Sangi may be of pure silk, or generally of a silk and cotton mixture, the warp being coarse and the weft fine. It may have a wavy pattern in yellow on a red ground, or a series of variegated Khanjari stripes, as for example, four

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small and two large appearing alternatively; the Sangi proper is generally light red with a yellow pattern made up of a series of dots.

Coming to the pure silks in all their shimmering loveliness, mention may also be made of the Gulbadans of Tanjore and Tiruchirapalli, which have so much of gold thread in them that they may almost be ranked among the brocades; then there are the magnificent gold saris of Madhya Pradesh, the embroidered silks of Kashmir, the Mysore silks shot with gold, lending to them an enchanting beauty; among others there are also the Tanzebs or silk muslins of Varanasi and Lucknow, the satinettes of Azamgarh and the Tusser silk saris of Sambalpur, with the borders and ends dyed a brilliant crimson, yellow, or blue. Rightly famous also for their richness and beauty are the watered silks of Surat, the Magia silk saris of Ahmadabad, the silk satinettes of Yeola and Kathiawar; the lovely saris of the North Arcot district are woven mostly in check designs, outlined in black or gold, with the meshes in orange or red.

From wherever the exquisite silken fabrics may come, from whichever part of the country, the treatment of their colour schemes is always masterly; often two tints or shades of the same colour will be used, producing a subtle interchange of light and shade. The perfect distribution of the colours and the judicious use of colour harmonies lend to Indian decoration in general and her textiles in particular, a specific charm and a subtle and subdued beauty.

Perhaps the loveliest, the most charming, of all the silks of India, most commonly in the form of saris, is the Baluchar Buttidar of Murshidabad in West Bengal. Fantastically desirable in their utter loveliness, they are today the prized heirlooms of many a Bengali family for, alas, the art of the Baluchar Buttidar has faded away with the death of Dubraj, the last of the great master-weavers of Bengal. However, an attempt is now seriously being made to revive the production of these lovely saris with their dignified charm, and new designs are being evolved to suit the present time, perhaps more sophisticated but less fastidious. Today, the expert weavers of Banaras have successfully copied the traditional Baluchar Buttidar saris, but their price is excessive.

In brief, if the Jamdani is a figured muslin, the Baluchar Buttidar may be considered as a figured silk. The Butti (flower or sprig) designs are woven with a silk weft in old gold, white, red, cream, orange, or yellow, the ground colour usually being in a flaming red, deep purple, or shot with dark reds and blues. The ground colour may however occasionally be dark blue, but this was not very common in the past. The design of the field is generally made up in the traditional saris of Buttis, floral sprays both large and small, set out on the sari ground like a mosaic, each colourful sprig like an enamelled jewel glittering in the darkness of the sober field. No metallic thread is ever used. Though brilliant to look at, the colour harmonies are invariably soft and subtle and reposeful, with only a muted whisper of frivolity, gaiety, glamour, and romance.

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The Anchala or end-piece of the Baluchar Buttidar sari is traditionally highly decorated, the design consisting of Kalkas, flowering plants, the Tree of Life, animals, women conversing or in customary poses, ladies with flowers, men smoking the Hooka or shown riding, all elaborately detailed, but with the animals and the male and female figures, and even the plant life, highly formal and stylised. This introduction of a pictorial element in textile design is novel and unique with the Baluchar Buttidar. Very often the human figures, set horizontally and vertically, are enclosed in niches. So much for the Anchala ornamentation. The remaining part of the ornamentation is usually floral, following a traditional form of decoration, rhythmic and full of the freedom of unfettered movement.

The Baluchar Buttidar saris produced in British times show the introduction of European motifs, which were however depicted by the weavers less happily than the traditional designs of old. Many of the late saris figure men and women in European costumes and such probably were produced under the patronage of the East India Company who owned a factory in Murshidabad. It is interesting to note that in the traditional designs, all the human figures woven in the saris are invariably Muslim, and from this it is safe to conclude that although Hindu ladies did and still do appreciate and wear the Baluchar Buttidar saris, they were originally produced primarily for Muslim use.

The traditional Baluchar sari is mostly five yards in length and about forty-two inches in width. The end-piece is usually the most richly decorated, the ornamental design running the whole width of the sari and is about twenty-four to thirty-two inches in height. As mentioned previously, the field of the sari was generally decorated with Buttis, floral sprigs, although at a later date the field was often left blank. According to Ajit Ghosh, 'some of the best of Dubraj[1] were saris without figures but with a traditional Kalka panel Anchala, floral border, and lovely floral sprigs in the field.'

It is said that so complicated is the process of weaving the Baluchar Buttidar sari, so long does it take, that very often over a dozen weavers would work on a single sari piece in a close cooperative effort for days and days on end to minimise the time and the skill involved in its production.

So important a part does the Baluchar Buttidar play in India's silken textiles that it is necessary to have an idea of the traditional technique of its production. Generally, two Nakshas or design-plans are needed for the borders, two for the decorative Anchala or end-piece, two for the Butti motifs, and one each for the beginning and the end. A boy works the harness-cords for the sprigs as the weaver introduces the thread necessary for the design. This is followed by an introduction of a weft thread for the ground, the draw-boy remaining idle; then once again the latter manipulates the harness cords while the weaver places in the shed a thread for the border. Once again the draw-boy does nothing as

[1] The famous master-weaver who produced some of the finest of these saris.

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the weaver sends his shuttle from one end to the other to introduce another weft thread for the ground. During each operation the weaver carefully watches the manipulations of the boy as he himself deftly carries out the different stages of the complicated weaving technique. It is said that for a richly ornamental sari there would have to be as many as fourteen Nakshas to help in the process. It is therefore not too much to imagine how a sari, five yards long and forty-two inches wide, could take as long as six months to produce.

We have by now mentioned some of the famous cotton and silken art textiles of India in all her past glory. Such were the glorious fabrics of an age saturated with the essence of luxurious living, fabrics of unsurpassed charm, elegance, and beauty—fabrics that in the poetic fancy of Theophile Gautier attempted to match their dazzling brilliance with the noonday sun itself, contest successfully the cobalt luminosity of the high heavens; blazing with the glow of fire, 'the accomplishment of millions of fairies to produce garments of the hue of the atmosphere, with the colour of the sun, the moon, metals, flowers, jewels, sunlight, flashes of lightning—mixing all on an incandescent palette.'

IV

THE GRACEFUL SHAWLS OF INDIA

INDIA has never been an important producer of woollen textiles, although they must be of fairly ancient lineage as references to them are occasionally found in the Atharva Veda, the Shivi Jatakas, and certain other later works. But the superb shawls of Kashmir—true works of art and the craftsmen's nimble skill—make up in quality for the low quantitative production of woollen fabrics in this country. In ancient times wool and garments made of animal fleece were considered in India unclean except for outer wear. It is most likely that woollen clothes were introduced into the country by invaders from the cold steppes of Central Asia.

The Kashmir shawls are definitely pre-Moghul in origin and design. May be, India is the probable home of the shawl as an article of personal wear as used today round the shoulders or over the head. John Irwin of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, an authority on Indian textiles, tells us: 'The Italian traveller Pietro della Valle, writing in 1623, observes that whereas in Persia the scial or shawl was worn as a girdle, in India it was more usually carried "across the shoulder."[1] This fact confirmed by a contemporary portrait gives India some claim to be regarded as the true home of the decorative shawl in the sense in which it became known in Europe: a loose enveloping shoulder-mantle woven

[1] Pietro della Valle, *The Travels of Pietro della Valle*, Hakluyt Society, 1891.

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either partly or wholly, in an animal fleece.'[1] In this connection it is rather interesting that even at the present time, the Dasturs or priests of the Parsis, descendents of the original Iranians and professing the Zarathustrian faith, when ceremonially arrayed, drape a woollen shawl round the waist.[2]

According to Baron Charles Hugel, Indian tradition has it that the founder of the woven shawl industry in Kashmir was Zain-ul 'Abidin, often known as the Akbar of Kashmir. Apart from the northern state of Kashmir, high quality shawls are also made in Amritsar and Ludhiana, though scarfs and wraps are more commonly produced here. But, of course, the best and most desirable of the shawls are those of Kashmir, justly world famous for the delicacy of their workmanship, the finest being the 'ring shawl' of old, so named because when sufficiently folded it can be passed through a man's signet ring.

The lengths to which the Kashmiri shawl weavers would go in their elaboration of this product is apparent from the following description by Sir George Birdwood of one of the Kashmir shawls in the British Royal Collection:

'One is worked with a map of the city of Shrinagar, the capital of Cashmere; the streets and houses, gardens and temples, with the people walking about among them, and the boats on the deep blue river being seen as clearly, in the quaint drawing of a medieval picture, as in a photograph.'

Another Kashmir shawl in the same Collection is thus described: 'Another shawl more soberly coloured, is one mass of the delicate embroidery, representing the conventional Persian and Cashmere wilderness of flowers, with birds of the loveliest plumage singing in the bloom, and wonderful animals stalking round, and wandering men.'[3]

Emperor Akbar was a great admirer of the shawls of Kashmir. It was he who began the fashion of wearing them in duplicate, sewn back to back, so that the under surfaces of the shawls were never seen (Do-shala). During the times of the pleasure-loving Moghuls, the shawls most desired were those worked in gold and silver thread and described in 1630 by Sebastien Manrique as shawls with 'border ornamented with fringes of gold, silver and silk thread.'[4] He further wrote, 'They wear them like clothes, either muffling themselves up in them or else carrying them under their arms.'

The majority of the woollen fabrics of Kashmir, and particularly the best quality shawls, were and are still made of Pashm or Pashmina,[5] which is the wool of the *Capra hircus,* a species of the wild Asian mountain goat. Hence the shawls came to be called Pashmina. The fine fleece used for the shawl is that which grows under the rough, woolly, outer coat of the animal; that from the under-belly,

[1] John Irwin, *Shawls,* 1955.
[2] S. N. Dar, *Costumes of India and Pakistan,* 1969, Pl. VII.
[3] Sir George Birdwood, op. cit.
[4] Sebastien Manrique, *The Travels of Sebastien Manrique, 1629-43,* Hakluyt Society, 1926-7.
[5] This is now difficult to obtain on account of India's loss of trade with Tibet since the latter's occupation by China.

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which is shed on the approach of hot weather, is what is most favoured for the best products. Materials of an inferior grade were made of the wool of the wild Himalayan mountain sheep (*Ovis orientalis vignet*), the Argali (*Ovis ammon*), the Bharat (*Pseudois nayaur*), or the Himalayan Ibex (*Capra ibex*). However, the best fleece—soft, silky and warm—is the Asli Cus, of wild goats, and painstakingly gathered from shrubs and rough rocks against which the animals rub off their fleece on the approach of summer. This was undoubtedly the soft fleecy wool from which were made the famous and much coveted 'ring shawls' of Moghul times. Unfortunately, very inferior and second rate wool taken from domesticated sheep and goats provide most of the wool used today on the looms of Kashmir.

The two chief types of Kashmir shawls are the Do-shala (twin-shawls) and the Chaddar-rumal or Kasaba. As the name designates, the former are always sold in pairs, there being many varieties of them. In the Khali-matan the central field is quite plain and without any ornamentation. The Char-bagan is made up of four pieces in different colours neatly joined together. In the Chand, the central field of the shawl is embellished with a medallion of flowers. However, when the field is ornamented with flowers in the four corners we have the Kunj. In the Dorakha the pattern is so woven that it appears the same on both sides of the shawl. Perhaps the one in most demand is the Shah-pasand ('King's Choice'), in which the decorated borders at the ends of the shawl are broader than those on the sides.

The Kasaba shawls are squarish in shape. They were probably produced on account of European demand, as were also the half-shawls, which are so woven and embroidered that the design shows on both of the visible surfaces when the shawl is folded in half across the middle. They are generally in a twill weave or may have damask patterns in a plain colour woven into them; they may even be elaborately embroidered.

Perhaps the most characteristic of the Kashmir shawls is the one made like patchwork. The patterns are woven on the looms in long strips, about twelve to eighteen inches in length and from half to two inches in width. These design strips, made on very simple and primitive looms, are next cut to the required lengths and very neatly and expertly handsewn together with almost invisible stitches, and finally joined by sewing to a plain central field piece. As a variation, pieces may be separately woven, cut up in various shapes of differing sizes, and as before, expertly sewn together and then further elaborated with embroidery. But there is a difference between these two types. While the patchwork loom shawls are made up from separate narrow strips, the patchwork embroidered shawls consist of a certain number of irregularly shaped pieces joined together, each one elaborating and balancing the predominant colour scheme of the shawl.

The colours most commonly seen in Kashmir shawls are yellow (zard), white (sufed), black (mushki), blue (ferozi), green (zingari), purple (uda), crimson (gulnar), and scarlet (kirmiz). The design motifs are usually formalised imita-

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tions of Nature—quite often the leaf of the Chenar tree so abundant of growth in the high altitude of this northern State, apple blossoms, the almond, the tulip, and occasionally the fruits of the region. When birds appear in the ornamentation, they are always in a riot of rich colours.

The shawls used to be a very important product of the Kashmir looms and the skilled workmanship of deft fingers. Even today the fine shawls of olden days are greatly prized and fetch high prices.

Technically speaking, the Kanikar or Tili shawl is the one where the designs are produced on the loom itself. The embroidered Amlikar shawls are discussed later. The mode of shawl weaving is correctly known as the twill-tapestry technique and this is very similar to that of tapestry weaving in the West. In simple terms, the pattern of the shawl is produced in the basic fabric by means of smooth, light, wooden spools known as Tojlis, the ends of which are previously charred in a fire to prevent them from roughening in use and damaging the product being woven. Each Tojli holds about three grains by weight of the woollen yarn; from 400 to 1500 Tojlis may have to be used in the weaving of any design that is at all elaborate.

The design itself is formed solely by the weft threads. The latter do not run the full width of the shawl, but are woven back and forth round the threads of the warp wherever each colour is required. The simple and unsophisticated loom used by the Kashmir weavers is horizontal, unlike those used for tapestry weaving in Europe.

The twill-tapestry technique is very slow and laborious; further it requires a high degree of specialisation on the part of the weaver and others. Actually, before the weaving itself begins, six other specialists take part in the preliminary preparation: the warp maker, the warp dresser, the warp threader, the pattern drawer, the colour caller, and the pattern master. The first twists and prepares the yarn of the warp to the thickness required. The warp is now starched by the warp dresser and the yarn passed through the heddles of the loom by the warp threader.

The Naqqash or pattern drawer is the most important and highly paid of the six specialist craftsmen. He prepares the designs and may sometimes colour them himself, but generally this part of the work is that of the colour caller or Tarah-guru. With the pattern drawer's design in front of him, he calls out the different colours, from the bottom upwards, denoting the number of warp threads across which each colour has to spread. The Ta'llim-guru, the pattern master, notes these instructions down in a kind of shorthand that the weavers can translate, understand, and follow.

These specialists prepare the warp for the main part of the shawl as above, while a separate group similarly make ready the warp for the narrow border.

The traditional practice as handed down from father to son was for the pattern part of the shawl to be woven on a single loom, the undecorated pieces

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TWO SUPERB EXAMPLES OF THE PATOLA, SILK MARRIAGE SARIS FROM SURAT

The cloth is woven with warp and weft which have been separately tied and dyed by the Bandhani process

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being produced on a separate loom, using the usual shuttle. However, in the early part of the nineteenth century, when the shawl design tended to become more and more intricate and difficult to produce, specialisation set in with the division of labour. The whole work, even for a single shawl, was divided between two or three looms. The individual parts of the design, each woven separately, were then neatly sewn together by the Rafugar, with stitches so fine as to be almost invisible to the naked eye. It is said that sometimes as many as eight looms would be employed in the making of a single shawl, and according to Moorcroft, one shawl had been made up of 1500 separate pieces.

Before passing on to the embroidered shawls, the Jamaivar of Kashmir, which also is a loom-designed but brocaded woollen fabric, deserves a brief mention. The Jamaivars are of fixed length, that is, they are available only as cut pieces, with the ends fringed as in the plaids of Scotland. Actually, the ends are woven into a fringe from the warp threads themselves; but in the Jamaivars produced in Amritsar and Ludhiana the fringe is separately made and ultimately sewn on. And therein lies the difference and a clue to identification.

The Jamaivar is woven wholly of wool or with some cotton admixture; but the floral design and brocaded parts are invariably in silk or Pashmina wool. Many designs are found in this woollen brocaded material but the floral motif is dominant: large flower sprays (Kirkha Buttis) and the small-flowered (Rega Buttis). The Jaldars are the net-like patterns. The original earliest designs were generally striped, the florals following on them. Some of the recent designs are unfortunately artistically cheap and garish, more like inferior wall-paper which they try to imitate. A different design, consisting of alternate narrow and wide stripes, in rich shades of red (sometimes blue) and with floral scrolls on white or yellow ground originated in Jabalpur. Here there are no additional brocaded weft patterns.

The embroidered Amlikar shawl is a true masterpiece of the Kashmiri embroiderer's art and hereditary skill, an art that is dying a slow lingering death.

Early in the nineteenth century there originated the needle-worked Amlikar or Amli, a shawl embroidered almost all over with the needle on a plain woven ground. But this was no sudden innovation or the creation of a new style, as the needle-embroidered shawl was known in Kashmir even before this time. But it is an undoubted fact that it was with the beginning of the nineteenth century that such shawls came to be produced in greater numbers than ever before. To quote John Irwin: 'Needle-work shawls were made throughout the nineteenth century, and apart from those simulating loom-woven patterns, many were made with scenes depicting human figures. . . . It is important to add here, however, that after 1850 there was a marked deterioration in the technique of many Amli shawls—particularly those with human figures—and some of the embroiderers resorted to a comparatively coarse chain-stitch, sometimes executed on a cotton ground.'[1]

[1] John Irwin, op. cit.

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The different parts of the embroidered shawl have a terminology of their own. Thus, the Hashiya or border runs along the whole length of the shawl, and could be single, double or treble; the embroidery at the two ends is the Phala, with the Tanjir or chain embroidered above and below; the corner decoration, mostly flower clusters, is the Kunj Butta. This cone or Butta motif with its flowing curves and floral diaper is the most popular. As a rule there is only one row of cones; when there are two, we have the Dokad, Sekhad up to five rows, and Tukadar if the number of rows exceeds five. The Jhal is the decoration in the interspaces between the cone motifs. Generally speaking, the Mattan is that part of the field that is ornamented with embroidery.

How these exquisite shawls are produced deserves a brief description. The cloth woven for the shawl is laid on a very smooth plank of wood and skilfully rubbed with a highly polished agate stone or a piece of carnelian, till perfectly smooth and even. The design to be embroidered is first drawn on paper and its lines pricked through with a needle. It is next transferred to the smoothened cloth by pouncing with finely pulverized charcoal. Hence the design stencil thus made can be used again and again.

The embroidery stitch employed is rather like a kind of parallel darning stitch. The embroidery thread is made to nip up the warp thread, but it is rarely allowed to penetrate the entire fabric. This clever mode of work makes the embroidery seem as if produced actually on the loom. The outlines of the design are further touched up and accentuated with silk or woollen thread of different colours run round the finer details; the stitch used for this is like an obliquely overlapping darn stitch. As a matter of fact, all the stitches used are so minute and fine that individually they can be seen with the unaided eye only with difficulty. Again, when Pashmina wool is used for the embroidery work, it is made to blend so intimately with the texture of the basic shawl material that it would be difficult to insert even a fine needle between the embroidery stitches and the basic fabric.

Soft, fleecy and warm. Elegant and dignified in their staid sobriety. Pure like the clean white tops of the Himalayan ranges—such were the shawls of old Kashmir, a land of skilled craftsmanship, a land of flowers and divine beauty and the eternal snows. . .

V

INDIA'S EXQUISITE EMBROIDERY

'THOU shalt embroider the coat of fine linen and thou shalt make the mitre of fine linen and thou shalt make the girdle of needlework.'

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Thus speak the Christian scriptures describing the Tabernacle and the holy garments of Aaron. And, again:

'The King's Daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework.'

The above testify to the antiquity of embroidery, dating it back to remote ages. Although it is not contended that it originated in this country, there can be no doubt of its Eastern birth. However, hand embroidery must have been known and practised in India even in very early times, though the only known examples we have can be dated no further back than the sixteenth century, on account of the perishable nature of all textiles. It is interesting to know that some of the figurines found at the sites of the Indus Valley Civilization of the 3rd millennium B.C., show indications of garments that appear as if embroidered. Again, at Mohenjo-Daro were found needles made of bronze which apparently were used for the purposes of needlework.

Buddhist sculpture, especially at Bharut and Sanchi, dating from the 2nd-1st century B.C., reveal drapery with embroidered patterns, mostly on the waist and the head-bands of the figures. Embroidered garments are also to be seen in the wall paintings of the Bagh and Ajanta caves. Here the tunics are shown embroidered round the neck and the sleeves and sometimes even down the front.

In the Karkhanas or workshops maintained by the Moghul emperors, embroidery was carried on at a brisk pace. In the seventeenth century the celebrated French traveller Bernier wrote:

'In one hall embroiderers are busily employed, superintended by a master. In another you have goldsmiths: in a third, painters . . . in a sixth, manufacturers of silk, brocades, and those fine muslins of which are made turbans, girdles with golden flowers, and drawers worn by females, so delicately fine as frequently to wear out in a single night. . . . .'

A peculiarity of all Indian needlework is that the embroidery needle is pulled away from and not drawn towards the worker, as common in the West. According to Sir George Watt, 'By each and every race of people in India the needle is therefore inserted within the fabric and the thread is drawn away from the operator. . . . It is customary for darn stitch to be employed on coarse cotton and chain stitch to be used on silk or woollen fabrics. The former covers the textile, the latter ornaments certain isolated portions of it. The one corrects the inferiority of the garment, the other adds to its luxurious merits.'[1]

The Indian craftsman excels in hand embroidery on cotton, silk, wool, and velvet, creating products which raise the admiration of all—the Kashida embroidery of Kashmir, the darn stitch Phulkari of the Punjab, the Kanthas of Bengal, the silk embroideries of Varanasi, the embroidered muslins of Dacca and Patna, the sumptuous fabrics of Hyderabad, richly worked in gold and silver

[1] Sir George Watt, *Indian Art at Delhi*, 1904.

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thread and coloured silks, the resplendent gold embroidered Makhmals (velvets) of Lucknow, and the mirror work, chain stitch embroidery of Kathiawar and Kutch.

In some parts of India fine muslin used to be cleverly embroidered with green beetle wings and gold, or in gold painted spangles and imitation pearls. Leather is still embroidered in some regions of Sind and the leather embroidery of Gujarat was once very popular. The celebrated world traveller, Marco Polo, writing about Gujarat over seven hundred years ago, said: 'They also work here beautiful mats in red and blue leather, exquisitely inlaid with figures of birds and beasts, and skilfully embroidered with gold and silver wire. They are marvellously beautiful.'

Perhaps the most beautiful and almost wonderful piece of embroidery ever to be done in India was the veil ordered by one of the early Gaikwads of Baroda for the tomb at Medina of the Prophet Mohammed. In the words of Sir George Birdwood, 'It was composed entirely of inwrought pearls and precious stones, disposed in an arabesque pattern, and is said to have cost a crore of rupees. Although the richest stones were worked into it, the effect was most harmonious. When spread out in the sun it seemed suffused with a general iridescent pearly bloom, as graceful to the eyes as were the exquisite forms of its arabesque.'[1]

The embroidered shawl of Kashmir has already been mentioned. The Kashida embroidery of Kashmir, done in gay colours and pleasing designs on silk or wool, is justly famous and desired throughout the world. Apart from the shawls, the articles embroidered today include saris and dress materials, table linen and cushion covers, handkerchiefs and veils, all articles of domestic or personal use. The stitches commonly employed by the Kashmiri embroiderer are the stem, the chain, and the satin stitch.

No wonder the embroidery of Kashmir raises so much joy and enthusiasm in the hearts of all. The colours, the many tints and shades, are numerous. Mrs. Kamala Dongerkery feels entitled to believe that the bright colours which go to make up Kashmir's 'gorgeous sunsets, the azure mountains, the sparkling lakes, and the variegated flowers and birds, have left their indelible mark on the minds of the workers.'[2] That the Kashmiri artisan, himself so steeped in Nature's own beauty and colour, transfers them into the texture of his embroidery and to the lovely designs of Kashmir's many other art-crafts. Mrs. Dongerkery rightly points out how the floral designs of Kashmir needlework tend to rival Nature's own exhuberant patterns. The Chenar leaf, the almond and apple blossoms, the cherries, plums and pomegranates, intermingle with the lily and the lotus, the iris and the tulip. Among the lovely designs there appear the birds of the countryside, the valleys and the highlands, the parrot and the kingfisher, the magpie, the

[1] Sir George Birdwood, op. cit.
[2] Kamala Dongerkery, *The Romance of Indian Embroidery*, 1951.

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canary and the woodpecker. Butterflies sometimes intrude; but primarily the flowers and foliage alone dominate, delicate stems meandering all over, slender lanceolet leaves filling the interspaces, attempting to surpass even Nature's own profusion. One of the commonest motifs is the shawl pattern that is supposed to have been inspired by the acorn of the Cypress. This motif is very common and occurs predominantly or in a minor key in most of the designs of Kashmir embroidery.

On the north bank of the Godavari, about thirty-five miles from the city of Aurangabad, stands Paithan, once a prosperous and flourishing city, but now in its days of decline, almost in ruins. Was this the ancient Pratishthan, later the capital city of the Satavahanas, mentioned in the early Greek records of the 2nd-3rd centuries B.C. and which also appears by name in the 14th edict of Asoka? Its famous embroidery is in gold and silver thread, the traditional designs mostly derived from old Moghul miniatures and the frescoes of the Ajanta caves nearby. These were the traditional designs always seen till the early years of the present century; but today the craftsmen of Paithan will embroider any kind of design to order, will carefully copy anything given to them—photographs, paintings, sketches, or whatever else the customer fancies!

The craft is more allied to weaving than to embroidery. It is woven on both sides on a loom, unlike the ordinary form of needlework that is done to be seen on one side of the fabric only. Gold and silver yarn stretched on the loom form the foundation and four to twenty-four shuttles are employed to produce the 'embroidered' design. The latter, drawn on paper, is placed under the lengthwise threads and the shuttles passed through these as demanded by the pattern and the colour. This is slow and laborious work and may take as many as eight days to produce a square foot of the loom-embroidered fabric.

The metallic thread used in this beautiful Paithan embroidery is made by a long and tedious and rather primitive method. A bar of silver weighing about 170 grams is covered with a very thin coat of pure gold. The silver is then sufficiently heated and drawn through holes of diminishing sizes in a steel draw-plate till wire of the required thickness, generally as fine as a hair, is obtained. This wire is now laboriously beaten flat by hand, wound round silk thread, and finally polished. This is the yarn that is used to produce a fabric imbued with the poetry of colour and the cadence of gold and silver.

An extremely lovely and elegant style of embroidery is the Chikan work of Lucknow, but also produced in Calcutta, Dacca, Varanasi, Bhopal, Allahabad, and Gaya. Done in white on cotton, linen, or silk, it is aesthetically rich though without colour and is distinguished by elegant simplicity and chaste purity. Here is no coloured flamboyance but the quiet dignity of refined aesthetic values—like moonlit beauty dimly seen through a veil.

The best Chikan embroidery comes from Lucknow where is produced work of great beauty and remarkable distinction. It is believed that the craft

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really originated in East Bengal and was taken to Lucknow during the reigns of the luxury-loving Nawabs of Oudh. In the Lucknow Chikan work, off-white or yellowish Tusser (Tussore) silk from the wild Indian silkworm is used, unlike that from other places and this forms a point of distinction. The superb embroidery of floral designs is best when done on the finest of muslins, the production of which was an old industry of Lucknow. As a matter of fact, in olden days this city was justly famous for its very fine hand spun yarn of 200 to 300 count. Another type of Chikan work is in satin stitch in white done on fabrics capable of being washed. Gold and silver embroidery on white cloth is the Kamdani style of Chikan work. In Bhopal also the satin stitch is used and the design often padded with a coloured material so as to be seen dimly through the white stitches, producing a very delicate and subtly pleasing effect.

Chikan embroidery and especially the Kamdani style is often carried out on nets to produce a sort of lacework. Today, it is often done on cambric and similar fabrics, and even coloured yarn may be used to produce handkerchiefs, curtains, luncheon and dinner mats, napkins, tray and table covers, and also articles of personal wear like kurtas, dupattas, zubbas, and dress materials of all kinds.

About half a century ago, the heavy and rather extravagant gold and silver thread Zari embroidery, the true Bharatkam of India, was very popular for festive wear, especially in certain parts of the country. It has however now lost favour as not in keeping with the sophisticated tastes of the day, perhaps on account of its rather ostentatious effect. This is ornate embroidery, attractive when not too exuberant—resplendent embroidery splashed as it were with minute specks of sunshine, or glittering with the rays of the silvery moon.

This embroidery is certainly very old, yet surprisingly enough it does not exhibit special marked characteristics in the different regions, being technically more or less the same wherever it may be produced. Its ancient lineage seems to be borne out by a reference in the Yajur Veda of a counterpane embroidered in gold and silver. Such embroidery certainly must have been known to the Israelites in Biblical times as the Exodus tends to show: 'And he made the Ephod of gold, blue and purple . . . and they did beat the gold into thin plates and cut it into wire. . . .' And, again, 'Upon my right hand did stand the Queen in a vesture of gold wrought about in diverse colours.'

The design to be embroidered is first stamped by hand on the fabric, using wood blocks and a thin mixture of chalk and gum water. Thus even a small number of different blocks can be used in various ways to produce many varied designs.

The manufacture of the gold and silver wire or thread used in the embroidery is a minor industry on its own. A bar of silver, about 45 cms. in length and roughly 2 cms. in thickness, is completely wrapped round with pure gold leaf and then heated in a furnace sufficiently to fuse the gold. The thicker the

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gold leaf applied, the richer the red-gold colour of the final product. Then the gold-covered silver bar is turned into wire by pulling it through steel draw-plates. The wire is made thinner and thinner by drawing it through finer and still finer holes in the draw-plate until it may measure miles in length and be as thin as a human hair. 'The tensile capacity of the gold is wonderful, for however fine the bar may be drawn out, the gold surface always remains,' so confirms D. H. Baden-Powell. The wire thus prepared is now flattened by gently hammering it on a small anvil, and finally wound round silk thread. Hence it appears thicker than it really is and yet remains strong and flexible, characteristics very essential in thread to be used either for weaving or embroidery.

The manner in which the metallic wire is wound round the thread is very ingenious and hence interesting. Meadows Taylor's description of the process is worth noting. 'The silk is very slightly twisted, and is rolled upon a winder. The end is then passed over a polished steel hook, fixed to a beam in the ceiling of the workshop, and to it is suspended a spindle with a long thin bamboo shank, slightly weighted to keep it steady, which nearly touches the floor. The workman gives the shank of the spindle a sharp turn upon his thigh, which sets it spinning with rapidity. The gold wire, which has been wound on a reel as it passes behind the maker, is then applied to the bottom of the silk thread near the spindle and twists itself upwards, being guided by the workman as high as he can conveniently reach, or nearly his own height, upon the thread; but it is impossible to describe in exact terms, the curiously dexterous and rapid process of this manipulation. The spindle is then stopped; the thread now covered with wire is wound upon the spindle and fastened in a notch of the shank when the silk is drawn down and the spindle is again set spinning with the same result as before.'

Gold and silver embroidery is invariably done with the cloth stretched on a wooden frame. The dainty and graceful Jamdani style is more popular on the finer fabrics like thin silk or muslin while the heavier varieties are more common on heavy silks, satins, or velvet.

Sometimes certain parts of the design, like the leaves and flower petals, may first be padded with coarse thread to raise them considerably over the surface of the cloth when finally gold-embroidered. This is the real Bharatkam of India.

'The diversities and local characteristics of *Bharat-kam* are as numerous as are the seats of the craft,' writes Sir George Watt. 'There is hardly an important locality of production that does not show something in its gold embroidery that is as distinct as are its ruined tombs, mosques, and palaces—something that marks the individuality of its rulers and of the dynasty of which, perhaps, it was capital. . . . The reader who may first examine the dignity of style shown in the Delhi and Agra work, next the ostentatious grandeur of Lucknow, and lastly the barbaric simplicity of Burhanpur gold embroidery, will get a fair impression

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of the value of the study. But it is in the details of wire drawing, in the form of wire used, in the nature of the stitch employed and the degree of combination with precious stones and silk that the most fruitful directions of classification are given.'[1]

Among the different famous varieties of this style of embroidery are Lucknow's Zardozi and Kamdani work, gold and silver thread embroidery that for decades dazzled the courts of the Nawabs of Oudh—embroidery of ancient lineage that may have originated in this region, but came into favour during Moghul times. Similar work was also once very popular in Bombay, Surat, Gujarat, Aurangabad, Hyderabad, Agra, Delhi, and Varanasi, and still is to a certain extent for limited use.

In the more delicate Kamdani style the metal is used in the form of a flattened wire; with two or three stitches, a Fardi or small dot is made, these dots being the peculiar characteristics of Kamdani embroidery. When done on delicate coloured silk, the Fardi twinkle like bright stars in the dark night sky, giving the work a rich and scintillating effect.

The Zardozi is much richer in appearance. Commonly done on heavier material like satin or velvet, here the metal thread may not be used for the actual embroidery. But, produced as Salma this may be stitched down invisibly on the cloth with silk thread to produce many beautiful and attractive designs. The Zardozi once adorned the robes of princes: today it is seen, though rarely, as sari borders or on choli pieces. Done on evening bags and costume belts, it is popular with European women. A little work in gold and silver spangles and twisted gold wire is common in Kathiawar; while in Surat the design is sometimes completed in flattened silver or gold wire or thin gold braid.

India's gold and silver Bharatkam takes one's mind back to the days of oriental pomp and pageantry. Gold always has had a fascination for the Indian mind. After all, it can withstand the ravages of time and the corroding effects of the natural elements. Is it any wonder then that embroidery in gold and silver should have a fascination for all, and that even today, though not so popular, it still has its traditional use on auspicious and festival days.

Bright, glittering and gorgeous is the silver and golden Bharatkam of India. This is brilliant, dazzling embroidery—may be rather ostentatious and overpowering in effect, perhaps owing to its birth in the royal courts of old. And if the delicate Chikan work of Lucknow is embroidery like misty beauty, the soft lilting melody of a lone violin, Bharatkam is needlework vibrant as if it were with the crashing chords and the cadenzed finale of a grand symphony.

The needlework most precious and dear to the hearts of the rural folk of the Punjab—the undivided Punjab of old—is perhaps the lovely Phulkari and the Bagh. Here is embroidery done patiently and lovingly, in which are centred

[1] Sir George Watt, op. cit.

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all the dreams of the young woman preparing for the future, hoping for love, marriage bliss, children—all the blessings of a happy married life. It is 'A work of fate, savouring somewhat of sowing in the red-ground soil. . . . Its beauty is to be manifested later on, with the rare holiday-making, when the worker will, perhaps, for the first time, unfold the veil to see and wear the fruits of her labour.'[1]

The Phulkari and the Bagh are the traditional embroidered shawls of the Punjab and the former Sikh States, akin to the Amlikar of Kashmir. Usually about $2\frac{1}{2}$ by $1\frac{1}{2}$ yards in size, these are some of the loveliest shawls to be produced in this country. Phulkari means 'flower-craft,' just as Bagh means a 'garden.' For in their ultimate effect they are veritable flower gardens, rich and colourful. The end-pieces may be in a different design to the main shawl, and even more elaborate and beautiful. But unlike the Phulkari, the Bagh does not have a separate end-piece. Every inch of the hand spun, hand woven, and home-dyed, coarse cotton khaddar used as the basic fabric is covered with embroidery in a blend of colours, appearing almost like rich tapestry with a beautiful silken sheen. The basic material is usually white or black, red or blue, embroidered with the soft, untwisted, silk floss of Kashmir called Pat, chiefly white, golden yellow, orange, crimson, or green in colour. The embroidery is done from the back in a darning stitch, each stitch being about a quarter of an inch in length. The peculiarity is that the embroidery is done on the reverse of the material so as to finally produce the predetermined design on the right side. As a rule, the ornamental motifs of the Phulkari are geometrical, made up of vertical, horizontal, and diagonal stitches; but the Bagh has an overall geometrically conventionalised floral pattern, known by various names. In short, in the Phulkari the ornamentation, mostly diapered, is dispersed, with large areas of the field colour showing round the outlines of the details. In the Bagh, however, the whole area is covered with the silk floss, and the details outlined by parallel lines of the field texture not more than one-sixteenth of an inch in width.

There are many kinds of the Phulkari and the Bagh. The shawls meant for daily use are the Saloo in red khaddar, the Til Patra with very little embroidery, and the black or navy-blue Nilak embroidered in yellow and crimson. The result is extremely charming and so the latter is justly popular. One of the very best is the Ghungat Bagh, 'the veil shawl,' which has embroidery of triangular shapes on that part which covers the head, the apex pointing towards the back.

The shawls meant for special occasions are invariably richly embroidered and with a full end-piece. Larger than the ordinary Phulkari are the Chope and the Suber, presented to the bride by her maternal grandmother during the marriage ceremony. The ground colour is always a rich red, with a special kind of embroidery, somewhat like the cross stitch, in a bright golden yellow. The field is left undecorated, the embroidery being restricted to the wide borders and sides.

[1] 'Phulkari Work in the Punjab,' *The Journal of Indian Art*, II, 1888.

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The Chope is a very important item of the girl's trousseau and the grandmother takes a lot of trouble in its making. The work must always start on an auspicious day, after a simple but solemn ritual in the presence of family members and friends. Thus it is born in an atmosphere of love and under the grandmother's deft and loving fingers, with her patience and faith in the future, it slowly grows to become a magnificent and beautiful shawl. Today, very few such masterpieces are made and a fine Chope of old is invariably a priceless heirloom, passed from mother to daughter on the wedding day.

The Suber is also in red and is worn by the bride at a particular stage of the marriage ceremony, the Phera, when she takes seven rounds by the sacred fire. The embroidery is simple, usually only five motifs in each corner and five in the centre, the rest of the field being free of any ornamentation.

Shishdar Phulkaris embody mirror pieces like the embroidery of Kutch and Kathiawar and used to be made in certain parts of the Punjab and the Delhi area. Tiny circular mirror pieces are held in place with a buttonhole stitch all round the circumference. The ground colour is red or chocolate-brown, the embroidery in yellow or slate-blue silk. Though rather ornate, the dully scintillating glass pieces reflecting the hues of the embroidered cloth lend the shawl a rather uncommon charm.

Quite a lot of crude work is palmed off on the ignorant as true Phulkari. The colours are often garish, aniline dyes having been used instead of the natural products of old. Mrs. F. S. Steele, who over half a century ago made a study of these lovely creations of the Punjab and helped in their revival, has this advice to give: 'In judging Phulkari work, invariably look at the back and classify merit by the smoothness and regularity of the stitches. It may also be set as an axiom that in so far as the pattern changes from pure geometric lines, so far has it deviated from the ancient art, which was essentially a diapering, not a flowering in silk. The colours of the ground work are best confined to two, viz., different shades of madder-browns and indigos, while the silk should be either yellow, or white, or green. Crimson is admissible in indigo ground, but it is modern.'

When we see the crude Phulkaris and Baghs of today, with Adris Banerji 'We realise with a pang and heartache that another magic world of art, patterns and colours created by voluntary effort, has been lost.'[1]

Very picturesque indeed are the Rumals of Chamba in the Punjab Himalayas, which are really small head shawls and not handkerchiefs as their name may suggest. Their pictorial quality lies in their being embroidered with scenes from the immortal classics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, themes from Indian mythology, and Pahari miniature paintings, Ragas and Raginis, the game of Chaupad, Ganesha, hunting and marriage scenes, the Nayikas, and often episodes from the Raslila of Radha and Krishna, all done in silk on Tusser or fine cotton

[1] *Marg*, Vol. VIII, No. 3, 1955.

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fabrics. Sometimes the embroidery consists solely of floral and geometrical designs. But this is not very common. Although the basic material is usually white or cream, the embroidery is invariably vivid and in contrasting colour harmonies, the needlework on both sides being the same. Generally square in shape, the Rumals may also be rectangular, ranging from two to six feet in length. Like the Phulkari and the Bagh of the Punjab, the Chamba Rumals also form an important part of a girl's trousseau and are gifted at the marriage ceremony.

Throughout the embroidery of these Rumals, underlying the pictorial motif is an undercurrent of feeling for design. A touch of lyricism is perceptible in the best work, enhanced by the superlative workmanship. The border designs are generally floral. There may even be an inner circular design round the central motif, formed by a meandering creeper, or in the case of the Rasamandala (Krishna and the Gopis dancing in a circle holding hands), by the outstretched clasping hands of the dancing Gopis. The centre of the field is usually filled with figures, Radha and Krishna dancing, elephant riders, or Krishna as Vishnu. Vaishnavite deities and figures from Vaishnavite lore predominate in the designs, and especially the Krishna legends. The embroidery is most reminiscent of the Kangra school of Pahari miniature painting—in the form of embroidery stitches instead of paints.

Like the artists of the India of old, the embroiderers of these beautiful Rumals are anonymous in most cases. Sometimes, however, a whole verse is stitched on describing the theme of the embroidery, especially in the case of scenes from the life of Krishna. Again, not all Rumals are dated or even datable accurately. But of the dated specimens known, the earliest seems to belong to the later part of the 16th century A.D. Babey Nanki, the sister of Guru Nanak, is presumed to have embroidered this Rumal and today it is preserved in a Sikh shrine in the Gurdaspur district of the Punjab.

A. K. Bhattacharyya points out that these Rumals play a more intimate part in the life of the common people of the region than the miniature painting art. The Rumals are after all household products, probably embroidered by the devoted hands of a loved member of the family. In them lies 'a rare touch of intimacy and grace not obtainable in any other form of art. As pieces of art, these have rare pictorial quality. . . . Done with devoted skill of the lady in the family, these are spontaneous expressions of joy of life, revealing a thorough appreciation of the sentiments of love and devotion. . . . This dynamic approach and intimacy of its execution are all pervaded by a divine grace which is symbolically present almost everywhere in Indian art, these *rumals* from the Chamba Valley being no exception.'[1]

The special kind of pictorial Chamba embroidery is seen not only on Rumals but also on temple cloths, wall hangings, bed covers, and sheets used for

[1] A. K. Bhattacharyya, *Chamba Rumal*, 1968.

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making offerings from the bride to the bridegroom and vice versa. Today, it can also be found on choli and blouse pieces and would be equally suitable in moderation on dress fronts.

The embroidery is usually carried out with a double satin stitch, alternated backward and forward, and done on both sides of the cloth at the same time. 'The result is an elevated charm spread by these coloured threads with the relief best brought out by this technique. The contrasting and bold colours of the threads in the embroidery in their own elevation leave the drab and dull background of the *mal-mal* or the *khaddar* into complete insignificance and nullity' (A. K. Bhattacharyya). A large number of colours are used for the embroidery, with blue predominant in the early examples. Krishna is naturally always shown as blue according to Indian tradition, though occasionally as mauve. Orange, yellow, green, sky blue, are used in all their infinite variety—the latter apparently being more important than reality or appropriateness to Nature. The early embroidery in folk style, with simple original designs invented by the women themselves, is perhaps more crudely colourful, with brilliant pinks and yellows, purples and greens used freely, as compared to the more muted colours of the sophisticated and classical varieties.

The Chamba embroidery should be the same on both sides, with the outlines of the pictorial elements in darker silk. The running stitch is used with no spaces between the individual stitches. Being of a pictorial kind, naturally the chief motifs of the embroidery are flowers, trees, architecture, human characters, and dancing figures. A characteristic feature to note is that the human figures are so embroidered that they appear almost to be in action, either in everyday surroundings or in poses of the dance. This is a great achievement of Chamba craftsmanship. No wonder Stella Kramrisch has described this artistic craft as a translation of painting into needlework. When skilfully done with small, overlapping, parallel stitches, the embroidery is almost like a miniature imitation of the frescoes in the palaces of the Punjab Hills. As Mulk Raj Anand says, 'It is almost as if the whole picture has been transplanted from the wall on to the cloth.'[1]

In Kathiawar and Kutch in the west, as well as in some parts of Sind in Pakistan, both the darning and the chain stitches are employed with great skill to produce literally embroidered pictures, elaborate and gorgeous. However, the satin stitch may also be used to quickly fill up large areas. The greatly elongated darning stitch is seen in the needlework of the peasant classes; the chain stitch is customarily that of the upper strata of society. The basic fabric is usually a brightly coloured homespun cloth, and the embroidery carried out with coloured cotton, wool, or coarse silk thread.

The traditional articles are the Choklas or embroidered handkerchiefs, two of which are presented to a girl on her wedding day and later hung up in the

[1] *Marg*, Vol. VII, No. 4, 1954.

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bedroom as decorations. Embroidered on coarse cotton, generally blue, they are completely covered by elongated stitches in floss silk so that the original basic fabric can hardly be seen. There may also be a border of patchwork in white or red cotton.

Another traditional embroidered article is the Nati or head-dress for a child, on the making of which the women devote much love and patient labour. It is always richly embroidered and may have many tiny mirror pieces inserted in the design. The embroidered Toranas or festoons decorate the inner doors of the village huts and houses. Richly embroidered they are made of many coloured pieces of cloth with pendants hanging from the bottom edge. Among the poor, they are of cotton with satin or darning stitch embroidery; among the rich, of silk and in chain stitch.

The Kathiawar embroidery is elaborate, lavish, and colourful, especially on the tight short Cholis and the frilly skirts or Ghagaras, the traditional dress of the Kathiawari womenfolk. It may be that the embroidery is rather on the gaudy side; even so, it is strikingly attractive in its own garish naivete and seems to set off to the best advantage the strapping figure of the young Kathiawari peasant girl.

A distinctive type of embroidery with a rather unsophisticated charm is the Kanbi of Kutch, generally done by the cowherds and the cultivators of the land. Although any embroidery comprising mirrors (Abalas) inserted within the design and carried out in an interlaced stitch is called Kutch embroidery, the genuine Kanbi uses the chain stitch, although the herringbone stitch may also be employed for floral designs on bright red cloth, with the stem and floral outlines in chain stitch. Actually, mirrors may or may not be used. The basic fabric is usually a rough homespun with yellow, orange, mauve, and black in the embroidery. To make the mirrors, glass is blown into small spheres, roughly silvered inside, and then broken into the required shapes and sizes.

In Kutch the embroidery is most commonly done on personal clothing like the Cholis and the frilly skirts of the village women and on articles of rural use like trappings for cattle, Toranas or festoons for the doorways, and even as a kind of tapestry for the walls. However, today it has received a little attention from the Western fashion world, as suitable on the fronts of dresses and as skirt material, especially when done on white or black. The traditional dark red ground is not so popular abroad though fancied by the village belles. This embroidery also looks appropriate and in harmony on cushion covers and furnishing materials in a typically Indian decor.

The Kutch embroiderer uses a hook similar to a crochet knitting needle. The fabric is fixed on a wooden frame to keep it taut, and the thread is inserted from beneath. The designs are generally large and mirrors may or may not play a part in them. The women of the Banjara gypsies of the Deccan do a rather similar

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type of embroidery, using stitches somewhat like the satin and the herringbone, and tiny mirrors are mostly used as in the Kutch Kanbi.

Under the soft moonbeams or the glitter of man-made light, the mirror encrusted Kanbi-embroidered garment sparkles with a rare beauty that may be a little extravagant but is entirely desirable, especially in the right surroundings.

From the Karnatak region in the south-west of the country comes the Kasuti, which in the Kannada language means 'embroidery,' its Marathi equivalent being Kashida. It is believed that the most beautiful Kasuti embroidery is done in those areas which were once under the domination of the Chalukya, and later the Vijayanagar, rulers. Still seen at its best in such places as Miraj, Sangli, the districts of Bijapur and Dharwar, it has never been an industrial craft, not even a cottage industry, but only a handicraft and a pastime for the women and primarily carried out for personal use. To be able to do the Kasuti embroidery well has always been considered a desirable accomplishment in a girl.

The design motifs are from temple architecture, the Gopurams of the South, the palanquins and the raths, and of course the lotus flower. We find also the common objects of country life, the cradle and the sacred bull, the elephant with its howdah, animals and birds, the ever popular parrot, and the peacock in all the glory of his extended plumage. Horses, lions, and tigers appear occasionally, but never the cat or the dog. Floral motifs are the most popular, but geometrical designs are not unknown. As a matter of fact, it is believed that this stresses its antiquity as the early work of a people is most often geometrical, with stitches governed by the warp and the weft threads, this leading to almost mechanical accuracy. The colours used are bright and clean—purple, crimson, orange, green—yet the blending of the tones is harmonious and dignified, and the colour harmonies perfect, the most common being red, orange and purple, or orange, crimson and green. The contrasting harmony of blue and yellow is rarely ever used.

According to Mrs. Kamala Dongerkery, it seems that this embroidery is carried out with silk threads of various colours, each about six inches long, picked from the tassels of a new sari. The Pallavs of old saris also constitute a good source of the embroidery silks. Of course, silk thread may also be bought and used on hand woven cloth of a dark shade, often black. The largest designs come first, followed by others of diminishing sizes and varying motifs, parallel to which lie alternate rows of floral designs. As the patterns become smaller and smaller in size, the distances between succeeding designs become wider and wider. It is common to begin with an elephant or a Gopuram and end with clusters of stars or mere dots. Four types of stitches are used, the Gavnti or line and back stitch, the Negi or running stitch, the Menthi or cross stitch, and the Murgi or zigzag running stitch. The commonest is the Gavnti and really beautiful designs are embroidered with it alone. The Negi produces the effect of a woven pattern, while the Menthi is most commonly used to cover up quickly the background areas of a design.

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If the Kasuti suffers from a fault, it is that here perfection is carried to a point where it tends towards the mechanical—like a machine-made product rather than that of skilled fingers. So uniform can this embroidery be that it could be mistaken for a woven or printed design.

Nothing written about Indian embroidery could be considered complete without something about the Kanthas (literally, rags) of Bengal, both East and West, the majority coming from Mymensing, Jessore, Faridpur, and Khulna, all in East Bengal, Pakistan. This embroidery is done by all classes, generally on used saris sewn neatly together. The old and discarded saris are placed one on top of the other till the desired thickness is achieved, and the edges are then folded and loosely tacked together. The field is now quilted in white thread; yarns of different colours, drawn out from the borders of the saris, sew together the borders of the sari pack, and the surface is embroidered with human and animal, foliage and floral motifs. It is said that it may take anything from six months to three generations to make a Kantha, revealing in its beauty the home craftswoman's artistic imagination and deft skill. It is possible that the Kantha may be a very ancient craft although no known specimen can be dated earlier than A.D. 1800.

In the very finest Kanthas, the embroidery stitches are so cleverly made that the design appears exactly the same on both sides, so much so that it may be impossible to detect which is really the right side and which the reverse. Many different types of stitches are used, but the commonest and possibly the most typical is a very small darning stitch, producing a dotted effect. Even a large area may be covered with closely spaced lines of such stitches. The outlines of the design are generally in dark blue, filled in with stitches of the same colour or in contrasting harmonies of red, etc. Sometimes the outlines and the areas enclosed by them are in blue, with stitches in red between the outlines and the field. The design may be further reinforced with stitches in white, running parallel with the contours of the motifs. The colours most popular are blue, yellow, red, and black. The sari rags thus transformed into a thing of beauty come alive with a new feel and texture, changing the old into something new, full of a new meaning and vibrant with colour. Appliqué work is also quite common on the Kanthas and is of two kinds: the motif is cut out of red cloth and stitched on to a white background fabric; this is done on large articles like flags or canopies. In the other type of appliqué work, coloured cloths are cut up into narrow strips and these are sewn on like braid round the outlines of the design.

Two of the ritual designs seen on the Kanthas are the Mandala and the Kalasha, done by women for festal occasions only in fulfilment of their vows. Another kind of Kantha has a border in a repeating design, like the border of a sari. Carried out in darning stitch, this gives the embroidery almost the appearance of a weave.

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There are seven different kinds of Kanthas. The Lep is a thickly quilted warm wrap for the winter, about six feet by four feet in size. The large and rectangular Soozni or blanket, used on ceremonial occasions, is generally six feet by three feet. The Baytan is a wrapper for books and valuable articles, about three feet by three feet square, and with white borders of rows of animal and human figures; the centre and the four corners are also embroidered. The Oar is a rectangular pillow case with simple decorative motifs like a series of straight lines or conventionalised trees and birds; a border is sewn round the four edges as extra decoration. The Arsilata is a wrap for combs and mirrors, narrow in shape and about twelve inches by six inches in size. The Durjani or Thalia is a square 'wallet,' with embroidered borders and middle; three of the corners are turned inwards so that their points meet in the centre. The edges are next sewn together, a string fixed to the loose top and wound round the 'wallet' to secure it. Lastly, there is the Rumal or handkerchief, naturally square in shape, and with a simple design like a lotus flower in the centre and a variety of other motifs all round.

'For if the kantha is a work of thrift, it is also an offering of love,' says Stella Kramrisch. 'It is presented at a festive occasion to a near relative, for being worn as a wrap in winter—these kanthas are large and thickly quilted—for keeping books and valuables or mirrors and combs wrapped, or as pillow-cover of very small size, as a bed-spread on which honoured guests may take their seats.'[1]

'The special significance of the Kantha quilt is not only in its artistic elegance but its vivid narration of legends and tales of heroism. They are wrought with such fineness and dexterity that no one would feel that it is quilting.'[2]

Assam also is known for its embroidery. All kinds of cotton and silk fabrics are elaborately ornamented in silk, cotton, gold and silver thread. This is done on the loom itself, but there are few professional weavers; the women do the work at home in their spare time. The textiles of the Naga Hills in Assam and the neighbouring state of Manipur may be 'characterised by their primitive design, quality and colour,' but they are strangely attractive all the same. The design motifs are mostly abstract and highly conventionalised human and animal figures, the favourite colours being maroon and black.

The traditional embroideries described above in some detail are some of the finest and certainly the best known, but mention must also be made in passing of the Azamganj satin stitch embroidery, with stitches so fine as to need a magnifying glass to see them individually; the quilted and embroidered Soozni or blanket of Peshawar and the Punjab, rather overloaded with ornamentation, those from Peshawar being the more desirable; the Dori work on shawls and woollen fabrics; the appliqué embroidery common in many parts of the country; the

[1] Stella Kramrisch, *Marg*, Vol. III, No. 2.
[2] Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, *Indian Handicrafts*.

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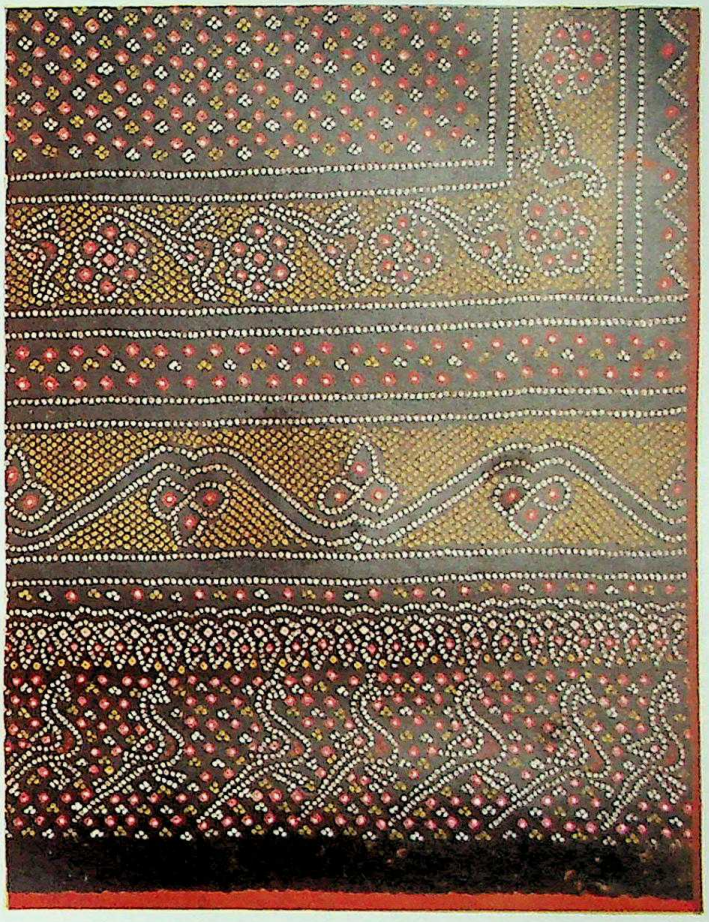
PLATE C

EMBROIDERED SARI IN PHULKARI WORK FROM AMRITSAR

This beautiful example shows the brilliancy and beauty of colouring obtained by the Punjab dyers with their native dye stuffs



BANDHANI WORK
(Knot Dyeing or Tie and Dye Work)

This is a most elaborate and beautiful specimen called *Dhuppatti* in Ulwar

(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. I)

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beautiful embroidered textiles of the South; the embroidery in gold and beetles' wings, exhibiting their loveliness by lamplight; and lastly the lovely enamel-like embroidery called Mina in which the floral design is first embroidered in brightly coloured silks and then outlined with gold thread, giving the effect of cloisonné enamels; hence its name, for Mina means enamel.

VI

THE ART AND SKILL OF THE INDIAN DYER

IT HAS been aptly said that if our craftsmen express the nation's instinct for beauty, the dyer of India has always expressed and still does to a limited extent, the Indian woman's love for colour, its harmonies and its contrasts. And in the turbans, saris, and the skirts of Rajasthan one can still see the embodiment of the dyer's art and skill.

In the past the most skilful dyers were those of Calcutta, Saran, and Darbhanga; of Salem, Masulipatam, Chingleput, and Kokonada. In the dyeing of silk and wool, the dyers of Kashmir, Amritsar, and Ludhiana excel. Those of Rajasthan, particularly of Alwar and Kotah, are best known for their skill in the dyeing of turban cloth, often producing a wonderful kaleidoscopic effect, one colour showing through the other in a bewitching manner.

In Alwar and Kotah, cloth used to be dyed so as to colour one side yellow and the other red, or red and green, without the slightest merging of shades. Thus, 'Not only does the flowing sari show a different colour where its fold turns over, but the one colour is seen through the other in a perfectly bewildering fashion.'

The Indian dyers once used only natural products for creating a great many different colours. It has been stated by William Moorcroft that in the time of the Moghuls, over three hundred colours were in use among the shawl-makers of Kashmir; but by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the number had dwindled to a mere sixty-four. Today, the natural plant dyes are no longer popular. Unfortunately, brilliant synthetic colours of doubtful permanence but available in a great range of hues, tints and shades, are widely used by our dyers. Though not as stable or fast as the indigenous products of old, they are certainly much easier to use.

However, here we will not concern ourselves with the dyeing of fibres or fabrics in any one colour, but with the uses of the dyeing techniques to produce such finished products as the wonderful wood-block prints, the auspicious Chunari and the breathtaking Patola, for they are truly the master-creations of the Indian dyer's skill and craftsmanship.

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At a lecture delivered at Burlington House in 1938, R. Pfister said, 'Whenever Indian painted or printed calicoes are mentioned, our thoughts turn first of all to the splendid panels of the seventeenth and the eighteenth century which made the fortunes of the various India companies importing them into Europe.' Printed cottons have always been a speciality of India and this craft must necessarily have been of ancient lineage. In *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea,* written some time during the later years of the first century A.D., there is a reference to the export of such cotton goods from the seaports of the Coromandel Coast and Barygaza (Broach) in the Gulf of Cambay. Further references to cottons printed with fast colours and exported from Calicut are to be found in the fifteenth century account describing the experiences of the Chinese voyager Chang-Ho and his followers. According to Duarte Bardosa, in service with the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, Cambay (Khambat), and Paleacate on the Coromandel Coast, produced large quantities of printed cottons that were widely exported abroad. In the famous work, *Travels in the Mogul Empire,* Francois Bernier describes his visit to Emperor Aurangzeb. Writing from Lahore on February 25, 1665, he tells how he was received by the Emperor in a tent 'lined with beautiful hand-painted chintz, manufactured for the purpose at Masulipatam.' Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, in the seventeenth century, has also spoken of the 'chintz' or printed calicoes of India, and the painted curtains, wall hangings, and bedspreads of Masulipatam.

So important are the hand block prints in the whole range of traditional Indian textiles, that a more or less detailed description of the methods used in the days of old will be of great interest to all, especially as the techniques followed today are not much different.

The stamping blocks used are made of wood on which the design motifs are carved in relief. It is not known for certain when they first came to be used, but it has been claimed without much justification that some of the clothing seen in the frescoes of Ajanta are illustrative of block printing of cottons. Perhaps the oldest blocks known to us, and most probably used for the stamping of cloth, are those discovered not in India but in the burial grounds of Egypt, of the tenth century A.D. Chinese hand printed silks dating from the T'ang dynasty of the seventh century were discovered by Sir Aurel Stein in the 'Cave of the Thousand Buddhas' at Tun Huang in Chinese Turkestan. From this it seems that block printing originated in China, where also were produced the first printed 'books.'

The cotton cloth is first carefully washed, bleached, and washed once again. The mordant, which used to be an emulsion of alum and Sappan wood, the latter to colour it slightly and to make it visible, is next applied with a brush or by stamping with a wooden block. Sitting on the ground or on a low stool, the printer presses the blocks on pieces of felt saturated with the different dyes and then carefully stamps them on the cloth where required. The block is further tapped with the left fist to produce a deeply coloured impression.

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The designs are generally in many colours and the cloth hardly ever pure white, due to incomplete bleaching. The colours most popular are yellow, green, madder red, indigo blue, and black. The design motifs comprise the Kalka or flame, the Tree of Life, floral sprays, peacocks and other birds, figures, diapers and geometrical designs. In the South especially, whole scenes from the Epics and mythological themes are depicted with a surprising mastery of skill. No wonder such saris and wall hangings are the highly prized possessions of South Indian women. However, the more elaborate compositions are produced by the wax-resist and hand painting methods described later.

Although hand printing and painting are done in many parts of the country, Jaipur is the centre of the craft. Here the designs are printed on both sides in such a way as to appear almost as bright and clear on the under as on the upper surface. One must not forget the famous Palampores (Hindi, Palangposh, bed-cover), although this term is now generally applied to all types of Indian hand printed and painted cottons, including shawls, canopies, prayer rugs or mats, handkerchiefs, and personal clothing materials for both sexes.

The printed calicoes or Kalamkari fabrics of Masulipatam are rightly considered one of the most popular of the art-fabrics of India. In the past the designs were painted on entirely by hand, using brushes or Kalams; later on came the use of wooden blocks. Today the best Kalamkari is a product of the careful blending of block printing and hand painting, a process both laborious and complicated and often taking three or four weeks to complete a piece. In the southern regions, the colourful floral designs of the Kalamkari textiles are sometimes outlined in gold, producing a very rich effect, rather like brocade.

As a rule, the feeling and colour consciousness of Indian calicoes, with their absence of machine precision, invests them with a supreme charm difficult to describe. As Sir George Watt has said, 'It has been observed that it is the quaintness and harmony in the Indian textiles that fascinates,' that the skill of the Kalamkari printers is as wonderful as their goods are beautiful.

Perhaps the most conscientious study of calico printing and painting in the East was made by G. P. Baker. In his words, 'As examples of decorative art, some of these printed calicoes are unsurpassed in design; they reveal an art which has reached such a pitch of perfection that it pre-supposes long centuries of apprenticeship and practice. They may be classed with the finest of oriental carpets. As masterpieces of manufacture they fascinate the expert calico printer, and teach the handicraftsman the lesson and value of patience in reproduction which, as has been said by the late Sir George Birdwood, is "the magic by which the inspiration of art can alone be wrought into reality and life." '[1]

In the year 1665, the French jeweller and traveller, Francois Bernier, visited Aurangzeb, the then reigning Moghul Emperor, as stated before. He was en-

[1] G. P. Baker, *Calico Painting and Printing in the East Indies in the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries*, 1920.

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chanted by the splendour of the royal Court and wrote ecstatically of the embroidered silks and the golden wall hangings and canopies of the Diwan-i-Am, the Hall of Public Audience, at Delhi. He wrote how 'it was red from without, and lined within with those *chittes,* or cloth painted by a pencil of Masulipatam, purposely wrought and contrived with such vivid colours and flowers, so naturally drawn, of a hundred several fashions and shades that one would have said it was a hanging *parterre.*'

The tool used in South India to paint the calicoes is the Kalam or Kalamdar. This is nothing more than a bunch of soft steel wires tied to a thin piece of wood to act as a handle. The parts of the cloth not desired to be dyed are covered with a resist, which is generally beeswax melted in a small dish, and applied with the Kalamdar. The cloth, which is first mordanted, is stretched across a table padded with a soft material and the design painted in with the hot resist. The dyer works with great speed and extreme skill, drawing his designs on the cloth with supreme ease, dipping the steel brush-like Kalam now and then in the hot liquid wax to charge it whenever necessary. Nowadays wood stamping blocks are used to imprint the resist to speed up production. The fabric is next dipped in the dye solution to colour the parts not covered by the resist. This procedure is repeated over and over again to produce all the colours of a complex pattern. This is the usual manner of using the wax-resist. However, when large areas have to be treated, they may be brushed over with a liquid dye after all those parts of the design not intended to be coloured have been rendered immune to the dye by means of the hot wax. When the colour is brushed on to the cloth, it will be noticed that the right side of the fabric is more intensely dyed than the other side, unless it has been subsequently re-waxed and the dye again brushed on the reverse. However, a uniformity of colour on both sides of a hand printed or painted calico goes to indicate that it has most probably been vat-dyed by dipping. After the cloth has been dyed in all the required colours, it is treated with alum solution to fix the colours, and lastly the wax is completely removed with boiling water.

Colonel George Bidie who had made a deep study of the subject of calico printing and painting with the use of wax-resist has recorded: 'In some cases the figures are printed on the cloth with wooden blocks, but all the finer *palampores* are prepared by stencilling and hand-painting. The stencil plates are made of stout paper. On these the outlines of the pattern are first traced in ink and then perforated with minute holes in the most accurate manner with a fine needle. The stencil is then complete, and when in use, is placed on the cloth and covered with charcoal in very fine powder, which is rubbed so as to make it pass through the minute perforations and leave a tracing. The rest of the work is done entirely by hand, and thus considerable scope is given for the exhibition of individual taste in the selection and grouping of the colours. . . . Some of the more expensive Masulipatam-made *palampores* are virtually hand-painted pictures on cloth.'

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The hand painted calicoes produced for temple use at Kalahasti in the North Arcot district generally bear scenes from the Indian Epics, exactly reproducing the style of Hindu temple architecture and sculpture, the latter with all its richness and elaboration of jewellery and other accessories.

The art conceptions of the Masulipatam calicoes differ according to the use they are to be put to—as canopies over idols by the Hindus or prayer mats by the Mohammedans. In the former, the designs are mythological or may portray scenes from the immortal classics. Those for Mohammedan use generally depict the *mihrab,* the niche or arched recess in the western wall of an Indian mosque and towards which the worshippers turn for prayer. The panel within may show the usual Tree of Life motif with birds perching on the branches and other animals lying below the sheltering shade of the benign tree. The earth is represented figuratively as a triangular mound and rivers by straight lines. Palampores are also made for domestic purposes, as pillow slips, bed covers, table cloths, etc., and these are generally decorated with rural and sporting scenes, almost invariably block printed and sometimes subsequently hand painted as well.

The really superior Palampores can be so perfect that from a distance of a few feet they can be distinguished only with difficulty from the finest embroidered shawls of Kashmir.

Varying techniques and colour schemes are used by the dyers in different regions like Coimbatore, Tanjore,[1] and Bangalore. In the work of the last named place, the designs utilised are human figures, palms, plantains, etc., the outlines of which are first treated with the wax-resist, and the areas within the wax outlines coloured by means of a Kalam. In this case, the wax is not used as a resist, but only to prevent the spreading and mixing of the dyes applied by hand.

A very rich effect used to be produced by the Tanjore dyers. The fabric, generally saris, was woven with gold thread introduced into the weft forming the background of the sari, leaving the design untouched. This was next covered with the wax-resist, using the Kalam, and the sari dyed a rich red; certain specific areas were then painted in darker shades to produce a tonal effect. When the wax was removed, the design appeared in white on a fine red ground. The sari was next further elaborated with block printing. In this way the process of dyeing subdued the brightness of the gold in the weft, providing a rich yet very soft and subtle effect, unequalled by any other fabric of this nature.

'The ability to apply drawing and colours free-hand was of revolutionary importance in the history of textile design,' John Irwin points out. 'It not only meant that designs could be individually drawn with a human and sensuous touch, but also that the designer was liberated from the limitations of the repeat-pattern, inevitably enforced by the print block.'[2]

[1] Now called Thanjavur.

[2] John Irwin, op. cit.

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Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable describes Bandanna as 'an Indian word (*Bandhnu,* a mode of dyeing) now usually restricted to handkerchiefs of either silk or cotton having a dark ground of Turkey red or blue, with white or yellow spots.' Actually the word is derived from Bandhana or Bandhani, which is a type of tie-resist dyeing, exhibiting deft skill on the part of the Indian dyer. Tie-dyed fabrics are mentioned in Banabhatta's writings of the seventh century A.D., the declining days of the Gupta Renaissance. Apparently the excellence of Indian dyed goods was known even in ancient Rome, if we accept as evidence the reference to them in St. Jerome's fourth century Latin translation of the Bible in which Job declares wisdom to be even more permanent than 'the dyed colours of India.'

The tie-dyed fabric is the Bandhani or Chunari—symbolic of girlhood, love, and marital happiness—figuring frequently in folk songs and love lyrics. Throughout the vast sub-continent of India, to the Hindu women everywhere, this is the most auspicious of bridal garments, a fabric ever reminiscent of youth and romance.

The art of tie-dyeing is most popular in the regions of Gujarat and Kathiawar, in Rajasthan and Sind. The Gujarati women may wear the Bandhani as a wedding-scarf, the Kathiawari and Rajasthani women may drape it over their bright embroidered Ghagaras or skirts, and everywhere the sari is worn it is used as such.

The various designs made up of spots, rings, squares, or stars are produced by folding the cloth several times till it is three or four folds in thickness, wetted with water, and placed on a block of wood in which have been stuck a number of pins or nails to outline the design motif. The tiny areas thus raised by the pins are nipped by the fingers and skilfully wrapped round with waxed thread, which is carried from one spot to the other without being cut. If the extreme tip is left untied, a ring will form, otherwise a total dot. It is said that only young girls can do the tying of intricate designs as their small and supple hands alone could carry out this delicate stage of the process. The nails of the thumb and the fore-finger may be allowed to grow as this helps in taking easy hold of even tiny areas of the cloth. The tie-dyed piece is now placed in the required dye, the waxed knots acting as a sort of 'resist' to protect such parts from being coloured. After untying, the knots may be re-tied in a different design motif, using another pin-block, and the fabric dyed again. This process is repeated as many times as necessary, till all the desired colours have been obtained and the whole design is complete. In Murshidabad, sometimes the thread used for tying the knots is not waxed, but instead is itself dyed in a water soluble dye. This colour is thus imprinted on the cloth where the knots have been made and so coloured spots or rings are made, instead of leaving the design in white.

By this process the patterns or outlines of figures are made up of spots, squares or circles, or even groups of dots. Experts often dispense with the pin-

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blocks and actually do the tying without any such aid. 'Should a still more elaborate design be contemplated, the dyeing and tying may be repeated indefinitely,' Sir George Watt tells us. 'For example, the first points may have been very large and the cloth so folded that when they are opened out they form perfectly circular white spots, squares, or star-shaped patches, upon the first ground colour. These may now be dealt with separately and be tied and re-tied until the circles, the squares, or the stars become variegated by concentric bands of colour, or a final special spot may be given in the centre of each by uncovering the tips so as to allow these portions of the tied up spaces to receive the desired tint; in fact, such exposed portions may be specially coloured by means of a brush. But since the tying of points can never be absolutely complete, the very centre of each bears the tiniest speck of the final field colour.'

Designs in transverse or zigzag bands can also be produced if so desired. For this the cloth is folded lengthwise and then tied at intervals to form coloured areas of the desired width after dyeing. When untied and opened, stripes in white will appear on a coloured ground. As a further elaboration, the same piece of material may be point-tied and re-dyed to form an infinite variety of interesting designs.

There are two traditional varieties of the Bandhani fabric, the Gharchola and the Chunari, the former being the more elaborate of the two where the design is concerned, and generally in a deep dull red, or a dark shade of yellow or green. The design is called Phulwadi when there are two or more colours in the pattern; and Shikari when animal outlines predominate, the commonest motifs being birds, elephants, flowers, and dancing figures, all highly conventionalised. In the most expensive Gharchola, squares are first woven into the fabric in gold thread and the tie-dyed design made within these squares.

The Chunari is a lighter textile and more delicate in its design and appearance. The tie-dyeing is restricted and spread over the fabric in isolated areas or groups of dots, combined to form only simple patterns. In some Bandhani fabrics, the ground colour of the border is different from that of the main field. In others, the spots forming the design may be solid dots instead of rings or formed of very fine concentric circles in two or three different hues. The extreme intricacy of the finer Bandhanis can indeed be astonishing.

One of the loveliest contributions of the Indian dyer's skill to the world of textiles is the Patola, a kind of double Ikat wherein the warp and weft threads are first tie-dyed and subsequently woven together, the dyed areas of the fibres coming together wonderfully to form the desired design. This is a very intricate and difficult process, so little wonder that the traditional patterns are not many.

The Patola technique is seen at its best in the silk wedding saris of Gujarat and Kathiawar. The most beautiful and colourful of India's dyed textiles, they have retained their popularity among sophisticated and discerning women even

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today. The only reason for a restricted use at present is their high cost. Rather similar are the Telia Rumals of the Deccan, the dyed cotton shawls of Orissa, and the Mashru of mixed cotton and silk fibres in which only the warp threads are dyed before weaving. This produces a charming wavy line effect.

It is believed that the intricate technique of Patola dyeing and weaving originated as far back as the fifth century A.D., in the Golden Age of the Imperial Guptas, and evolved into a refined industry by the eleventh century when it really came into its own.

The warp (Tana) and the weft (Bana) threads are separately dyed by the Bandhani process. The silk warp is first dyed in the lightest colour and the dyer, keeping in mind the design to be produced, draws on it lines in pencil or charcoal at previously fixed distances. The areas thus marked out are now tied with waxed strings and the yarn dyed in the next darker colour. This is continued till the darkest desired colour has been obtained. The weft threads also receive similar treatment and the warp and the weft are finally woven into the most charming designs of conventionalised plants, elephants, human figures, birds, and flowers. A characteristic of the Patola is that the pattern is exactly the same on both sides, the different colours merging gracefully and harmoniously together.

The best known Patolas (correctly the plural form is Patolu) are those of Khambat and Patan. In the former a diaper of white lines is formed of meshes flattened vertically. Within each mesh appear white flowers with dark green stems on a maroon field, the floral sprays lying sideways to the length of the sari.

In the Patolas of Patan, there is often no diaper and the design motifs lie facing the sides and not the ends of the sari. The bird and animal motifs are designed with the feet pointing towards the centre of the sari and not outwards. The field colour is usually a dark blue-green with the design in red, white and yellow. In the Surat production, the ground colour of the border is green as a rule, while that of the main field is usually dark red. These are the traditional types.

Generally speaking, the colours most commonly used are only five—red, yellow, green, black, and white. But they are never bright and never gaudy. There is no harshness in the colour harmonies, as the sober hues gently merge one into the other. It is said that 'in the mingling of these colours, the simplicity and treatment of decorative details, in the perfect harmony and distribution of the colouring, lies the triumph of the Patola craftsman' (Premlata Jayakar).

According to G. U. Patel, the chief designs in use at Patan in North Gujarat are eight in number:

Nari-kunjar bhat: dancing girl and elephant design with a parrot included. Often other birds, trees, and human figures are depicted.

Pan bhat: leaf design; the leaf is presumed to be that of the sacred Pipal tree (*Ficus religiosa*).

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Rattan chowk bhat: cross or diamond designs, often with interspersed diamonds also.

Okhar bhat: water-cress design. Perhaps this should be *akhrot bhat*—walnut design.

Phulwadi bhat: floral design, often enclosed in a single-line diaper, each diaper with three flowers.

Wagh-kunjar bhat: tiger-elephant design, the two animals alternating.

Chhabri bhat: basket design; each square containing an elephant is made up of four quadrants which seem to form a basket when any two of them are considered together.

Chowkhadi bhat: a diaper with a double outline, each diaper containing three flowers borne on a stem.

Another design is also seen at Patan, the *Ras bhat* or dance design, which is perhaps of fairly recent origin. Nowadays we also find many mixed and geometrical patterns.

Today, apart from saris, the Patola technique is also used to produce pieces for blouses and cholis, dress materials, handkerchiefs, table covers, and wall hangings.

So lovely is the Patola in its subtly harmonized charm that it would not be an exaggeration to describe it as an art-fabric of subdued vitality—colourful, vibrant yet soft in mood—the stuff that dreams are made of . . .

VII

THE SARIS OF INDIA

WE HAVE already described the exotic traditional sari materials—the priceless Baluchar Buttidar of Bengal, the lovely Patola, the dignified Bandhani, the auspicious Chunari, the glittering brocades, India's silks and satins. But apart from these, there are many others, the Ikats of Orissa in Tusser silk; the cotton Ikat saris of Pochampalli and Chirala in Andhra Pradesh and of Sambalpur; the saris of Paithan with their elaborate gold-embroidered Pallavs and borders; the Chanderi saris of Madhya Pradesh—elegant, soft and gauzy—in cotton or silk, with a silver or gold border and two similar bands for the Pallav; the Maheshwari, also from Madhya Pradesh, in pure cotton or in mixed silk and cotton thread, and generally found with stripes or check designs, and a narrow border in gold or of coloured silk. The colours are invariably delicate and the Pallav may be in two bands—in white and colour.

A fuller description, dealt with regionwise, is desirable at this stage. This is especially necessary as Indian textiles have today a world market and most

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of the saris are suitable for use as choli and blouse or dress materials and are actually popular as such in Europe and America.

It has been rightly said that the history of female costume in India is a story of the Choli and the sari. This may not be quite correct as the sari is not popular in certain parts of the country, like Rajasthan and the northern regions. But it must be admitted that as far as the greater part of India is concerned this holds true. For the sari is more widespread, however it may be worn, than any other kind of female dress. As Mrs. Kamala Dongerkery has pointed out, 'The five or six yards' sari with a Choli has set in as a common style of dress in India today. This common style has been handed down by our ancients and today, at the end of thousands of years of history, promises to remain as the most suitable, graceful and convenient style for this country.'[1]

In Bengal and the north-eastern parts of the country generally, including Bihar and Orissa, the sari is usually in plain colours, with a border about two to four inches in width and a Pallav with stripes laid breadthwise. Mostly these saris are in cotton for daily wear, but silk saris are also produced in Bishnupur and Shantipur that are rather akin to the Chanderi. Cotton saris in pastel shades and with intricately ornamented borders and Pallavs in silk are the speciality of the districts of Bankura, Burdwan, Birbhum, Hooghly, and Nadia, all in West Bengal. The traditional sari of Bengal is however the Nilambari. The silk saris of Murshidabad are also rightly very popular.

Nearby is the State of Assam where the costume of the women is rather different and distinctive. The plaids worn are generally woven at home on small looms and bear stripes and floral motifs, both in silk and cotton. Tusser or Munga raw silk is popular here. The ornamental motifs in the Pallavs and the borders are charming, rather naive but always very pleasing.

The saris of the central and western regions may be in cotton or silk, even in mercerised cotton, rayon, nylon, orlon, or any other suitable man-made fibre. After all, the western region is the original home of the mechanised textile industry, with its heavy concentration of textile mills. Necessarily, the fabrics here are of the best quality, in pastel or brilliant hues, tints and shades, to suit the fancy of one and all. The designs are various, stripes and floral, checks and geometrical arrangements, typically Indian or slanted to the fashions of the West. The borders may be narrow or broad, with motifs in cotton, silk, silver or gold thread. The Pallav is usually with three stripes appearing breadthwise on either end of the sari. The Maheshwari has already been mentioned. The chief centres of production are the districts of Khandesh, Ahmadnagar, and Ahmadabad, Baroda, Bijapur, Belgaum, Dharwar, Nasik, Poona, and many other places.

The saris of the Deccan are rather alike those of the central region, with slight differences in the basic field colours that are usually rather on the dark side.

[1] Kamala S. Dongerkery, *The Indian Sari.*

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The borders and the Pallav tend to be wider, both being in bright colours, most commonly shades of red, purple, and green. Many towns in the Deccan plateau produce saris, all generically called Irkal and Shahpur saris, these being the names of two towns in the Bijapur and Belgaum districts of Mysore State. The Shahpur saris are very much like the Maheshwari of Madhya Pradesh.

The Himrus of Hyderabad and Aurangabad can rank with the Banarasi brocades for their sophisticated brilliance, having received their chief patronage from Emperor Aurangzeb in the seventeenth century. Here the warp is of cotton and the weft of silk or even art silk today, woven into floral, spotted, or striped patterns. The mango and the Kisti or boat designs are also popular. A relic of the cultural traditions of the past, a symbol of graceful living, the Himru is used today not only as saris and dress material, but also for dressing gowns and expensive home furnishings.

Rajasthan is not particularly noted for hand spinning or weaving or for textiles in general; but her craftsmen are adept at finishing processes like hand printing, embroidery, and Bandhani, all on coarse or fine varieties of handloom or mill cloth. No wonder the Bandhani and Chunari fabrics of Ajmer, Bikaner, and Jaipur are so popular, not only as saris but also as material for turbans, odhnis, dupattas, and choli pieces. The printed cloth of Rajasthan, especially for the odhni, is rightly admired as this article of dress made up of lengths of two and a half yards is commonly worn by women not only in this State, but also by many in the central and western regions as well.

The South Indian saris are justly famous, both in silk and soft cotton, and generally in dark shades. They are commonly styled as Kornad saris—they may have originated at Kornad in the Thanjavur (Tanjore) district. The best known come from Arni, Armur, and Dharmavaram, all in Andhra Pradesh; Kanchipuram in Tamilnad; Mollakarmura and Kollegal in Mysore State; in Kerala, Trivandrum produces saris in very fine cotton and with gold borders and Pallavs; other centres are Bangalore, Adyar, Thanjavur, Doddabalapur, Kumbakonam, and many others.

South Indian saris have a quality and character distinctively their own. Woven in cotton or silk, the designs are traditionally Indian, with special stress on the borders and Pallavs that may vary in width from half an inch to eight inches, and from one and a half feet to four and a half feet respectively. Yet they do not form a separate and distinctive part of the whole as in the saris of the Deccan.

The saris of Karnatak are rather different. Mostly in dark colours, they have borders in red with small designs in white; the Pallav is commonly in broad bands in white and red, rather like the Maheshwari. In contrast, the Shahpur saris of Mysore are usually in pastel colours and with a delicate shot effect.

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Generally speaking, saris from Venkatagiri are of unbleached material with borders in Jari work. The design motifs are mostly floral, together with birds and beasts, both in the field as well as in the Pallav. The Travancore saris are usually in white, in bleached or unfinished fabric, but always with a pleasing border in colour and often in Jari work. Checks and stripes are as popular as florals. However, some of the finest saris in handloom fabrics, distinguished for their fine texture, their design and colour, come from Coimbatore, Madhavaram, Madurai, Bangalore, and Salem. They are mostly in cotton with simple or Jari borders, and are being produced today in varying designs and fast colours to meet the demanding needs of the time.

From Gadwal in Andhra Pradesh come the striking cotton saris with gold borders and Pallavs. In floral designs, they have a certain charm of their own, reminiscent of the past, yet they have proved very suitable for present day wear.

VIII

THE CARPETS AND RUGS OF INDIA

SINCE the publication of the fully illustrated book *Carpets and Floor Coverings of India* by Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, it would be redundant to deal here in any detail with this popular product of India's hereditary skill and craftsmanship in the field of textiles.

There is little doubt that the art of manufacture of pile carpets (where the Oriental articles are concerned, the words 'carpets' and 'rugs' are synonymous) came to us from ancient Iran. Many of the patterns of Indian carpets can be traced back to Persian origins. However, there is a school of believers in India who stoutly maintain in spite of all evidence to the contrary that the art of carpet weaving is truly indigenous. For example, 'it was once believed that India learnt carpet-weaving from Persia. But the methods and designs of the carpet-weavers in our country are so peculiarly indigenous and so distinctly recognisable from those of other countries that this theory has now been abandoned' (Shanti Swarup).[1]

It must be admitted that the manufacture of pile carpets in India reached a high stage and became an important industry only during the reign of the Mughals, Akbar having brought Persian weavers to the country. Under royal patronage the industry grew and flourished, at least till the time of Shah Jahan, even the lesser potentates of the different provinces also maintaining carpet weavers and patronising their workmanship. As Sir George Birdwood wrote, 'The princes and great nobles and wealthy gentry, who are the chief patrons of these grand fabrics, collect together in their own houses and palaces all who gain a

[1] Shanti Swarup, *5000 Years of Arts and Crafts in India and Pakistan*, 1968.

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reputation for special skill in their manufacture. These men receive a fixed salary and daily rations and are so little hurried in their work that they have plenty of time to execute private orders also. Their salaries are continued even when through age or accident they are past work; and on their death they pass to their sons, should they have become skilled in the father's art. Upon the completion of any extraordinary work, it is submitted to the patron; and some honour is at once conferred on the artist and his salary increased. It is under such conditions that the best art work of the East has always been produced.' In A.D. 1655, Terry recorded: 'They (Indians) make likewise excellent carpets of their cotton wool, in mingled colours, some of them three yards broad and of a great length. Some other rich carpets they make all of silk, so artificially mixed as that they lively represent those flowers and figures made in them. The ground of some others of their very rich carpets is silver or gold, about which are such silken flowers and figures most excellently and orderly disposed throughout the whole work.'

In India rugs are made of cotton, called Daris and Suttranjis, and of wool pile which is the true Galicha or Galin—the carpet.

The foundation of the carpet is a warp made up of the requisite number of strong cotton or hemp threads. The pile is formed by skilfully knotting short lengths of coloured wool round each or each pair of warp thread so that the two ends of the wool tufts stand above the warp base, and these are subsequently trimmed to form an even pile of uniform thickness. The Indian carpet maker's loom is very simple. It consists of four beams and is set upright against the wall with the weaver sitting in front of it. The warp-setter passes a foundation thread over the top crossbeam, under the lower horizontal beam, back again to the top, and so on till a continuous warp is formed over the top and bottom beams. The weaver now forms the pile, following a pattern prepared by the master-weaver. As each pile knot is made, the wool is cut off with a sharp knife kept hanging from the right wrist. As each row of knots is completed, the weaver passes a weft thread through the warp, running it alternately over and above the threads of the latter, and finally presses the weft thread against the completed row of knots with a blunt comb-like Kangi. When the whole carpet has been thus piled, another carpet maker takes over and trims the pile knots to the required height. When taken off the loom, the ends of the warp are knotted in pairs, thus helping to bind the rows of tufts firmly. The carpet is lastly well brushed and is now ready for the market.

It is said that the vice of Indian decorative art is its tendency to run riot, go out of control, to end in over-ornamentation and vulgar display. Whether this is true or not remains to be proved by those who believe it. But it can be emphatically stated that Indian textiles, and particularly carpets, are completely free from it. With unconscious subtlety, thin and light fabrics are delicately coloured and ornamented, and the heavier materials more richly, both the orna-

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mentation and the colouring, perhaps subconsciously, adapted to the effect desired, especially when the fabric is used as it is meant to be. It is rightly said that it is 'difficult to analyse the secret of the harmonious bloom of Indian textures, even with the aid of Chevreul's prismatic scale,' and that 'it is only through generations of patient practice that men attain to the mystery of such subtleties.'

P.C.M., writing in the *Statesman* (1-1-1956), applies an esoteric symbolism to the designs of carpets. 'There is a hidden meaning in almost all designs found in Oriental carpets. The circle represents eternity; the zigzag water and lightning; the swastika guiding light in darkness; the meandering line continuity of life; the tree bounty. The whole carpet is said to be the emblem of eternity and the pattern the visible world of change.'

Kashmir has always been noted for her carpets, its harmonious colour schemes and aesthetic charm. But mention must also be made of the embroidered Gabbas produced here. Generally small, they are made by cutting out shapes from woollen cloths of different colours, which are joined together with the edges and field worked in a large embroidery stitch in suitable colours. The Kashmiri Namdas, equally famous, are simply made by spreading wool evenly on sack-cloth, moistening it with a mixture of chalk and gum water, and finally felting it by rolling backwards and forwards with a large wooden rolling-pin. Designs are formed by laying dyed wool on the nearly felted Namda and pressing it into the surface, or by wool appliqué work.

It is unfortunately true that the art of the Indian carpet weavers is no longer what it used to be. If so the blame lies with the ignorant customers of today. As Sir George Birdwood has so rightly pointed out, 'Few people seem able to realise that when buying oriental carpets they are in fact choosing works of art, and not manufacturer's "piece-goods" produced at competition prices.' Sound attempts are however being made today by the All India Handicrafts Board and various affiliated agencies to review the economic production of carpets and raise the quality sufficiently for the carpets of India to once again compete successfully in the world market as they once so easily did.

IX

SUCH were the fabulous fabrics of India of the years gone by, such are the re-creations and innovations of today. The web-like Jamdani, the gorgeous brocades, the Amru and the Himru, the varied colourful embroidery, the sedate auspicious Chunari, and the wonderful Patola, are still with us. In India, the fabric and garment have always been an integral part of life, always apart from individual modes and prevailing fashions, except perhaps among the sophisticated rich.

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'The world's leading courtiers have fashioned India's timeless fabrics, which delighted the fashionable ladies of Rome, those wondrous silks which are so ageless, into the most modern creations that Paris can dictate. The most sophisticated drawing rooms of Paris, New York, London, Tokyo, and Bangkok have scintillated with a shimmering miracle that is Indian brocade. . . .'[1]

Although there is a current flicker of interest in handloom textiles, especially in raw silk, 'The social changes in the country, the modern outlook and changes in dress and the concentration on simplicity rather than on the grandeur associated with silk-woven and gold-laced clothes and, above all, the economic factors, have all contributed towards decreasing the demand for hand-woven material.'[2] Yet it must be remembered that nothing can replace the hand spun and hand woven art-fabrics so laboriously made, literally inch by inch, by the weaver, infusing in each its own individual characteristics, evolving out of almost nothing a thing of dream-like beauty.

But as the years roll by, the number of power-looms in the country is increasing. And in spite of the desperate yet feeble efforts of many to encourage and revive the handloom industry, it has received a death-blow from which it can never really recover. The beautiful textiles of old, the lovely traditional designs, may continue to be produced for the discerning few for a few years longer; but they can never again compete with the power-loom products to clothe the ever increasing masses of this vast sub-continent. Perhaps, rather than bemoan the surging tide of power and progress, the clatter of the power-looms over the gentle whisper of the handlooms' shuttles winging their course from side to side under the skilled guidance of the weavers' hands, let us take to heart John Irwin's words: 'The history of art is a history of man's struggle to humanise his conditions. Since the machine has come to stay, the central problem is surely how to evolve the new forms appropriate to the period.'

Let then there evolve forms and textures new, reminiscent of the beauty of the past, of the years gone by, the soft pastels and the brilliant hues, exuberance or sobriety—the new yet the everlasting old. Therein alone lies the hope, if only an inner longing, to experience once again the skill and luxury of the past, but now alive to the needs and economics of the present day of speed and the rush of living, and the unending struggle even to survive in grace and peace, if not necessarily in luxury and plenty.

[1] *Shopping in India.*
[2] Jamila Brij Bhushan, *The Costumes and Textiles of India*, 1958.

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Tourist Information

These days, textiles and fabrics are not restricted to the areas of their production, but are widely available, especially in the cities. However, the following brief resumé of the different places a tourist is likely to visit and its the chief textile specialities, should prove useful.

AGRA (Uttar Pradesh). Zari work, zari embroidered handbags.

AHMADABAD (Gujarat). Patola saris, textiles of all kinds, especially mill-produced varieties; also gold, silver and tinsel lace.

AMRITSAR (East Punjab). Embroidery, Pashmina shawls, carpets.

AURANGABAD (Maharashtra). Himru fabrics.

BANARAS (Uttar Pradesh). See Varanasi.

BANGALORE (Mysore). Silk saris and fabrics, especially the specialities of the South.

BHOPAL (Madhya Pradesh). Zari work.

BHUBHANESHWAR (Orissa). Orissan handloom textiles, Tusser Ikat saris.

BIKANER (Rajasthan). Bandhani saris and fabrics.

BOMBAY (Maharashtra). Textiles of all kinds, cotton, silk, raw silk, or of synthetic fibres, handloom and machine produced. An especially good marketing centre for fabrics suitable for American and European women.

CALCUTTA (Bengal). The remarks made above under Bombay apply here with equal truth. A good place for the Kanthas of Bengal, Bishnupur and Shantipur saris.

CUTTACK (Orissa). Orissan handloom fabrics and rural home-weaves, Tusser Ikat saris.

DACCA (East Pakistan). Jamdani, figured muslins.

DARJEELING (West Bengal). Rugs, shawls.

DELHI. Textiles of all kinds, handloom and machine made, in all kinds of fabrics. A good centre for the traditional varieties and zardozi work, embroidery, fine homespuns.

GWALIOR (Madhya Pradesh). Chanderi and Maheshwari saris.

HYDERABAD (Andhra Pradesh). The Himru, mixed silk and cotton brocades, other silk fabrics, cotton Ikat saris of Pochampalli and Chirala, saris from Gadwal.

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JAIPUR (Rajasthan). Tie-and-dye (Bandhani) scarfs, saris and other piece-goods, hand printed fabrics, embroidered skirt and dress materials.

KASHMIR. Rugs and carpets, embroidered and plain woollen shawls, Gabbas and Namdahs.

KALIMPONG (West Bengal). Rugs and woollen shawls.

KANCHIPURAM (Madras). Silk fabrics and saris of South Indian designs.

LUCKNOW (Uttar Pradesh). Chikan embroidery.

MADRAS. Lacework, embroidered linens and organdy, embroideries of many kinds, silk and cotton saris of South Indian varieties.

MADURAI (Madras). Hand blocked fabrics, handloom saris.

MURSHIDABAD (West Bengal). Embroidery, silk saris.

MYSORE. Silk fabrics of many varieties, Shahpur saris.

PATNA (Bihar). Handloom fabrics, Zardozi textiles, hand printed cloth.

SHILLONG (Assam). Saris and fabrics in Tusser and Muga silk.

SIMLA (East Punjab). Woollen shawls, rugs.

SRINAGAR (Kashmir). See Kashmir.

THANJAVUR (Madras). Silk textiles and saris of South Indian styles, Kornad saris.

VARANASI (Uttar Pradesh). The traditional home of gold and silver kinkhabs (brocades); also cotton and silk fabrics woven with silver or gold thread interspersed.

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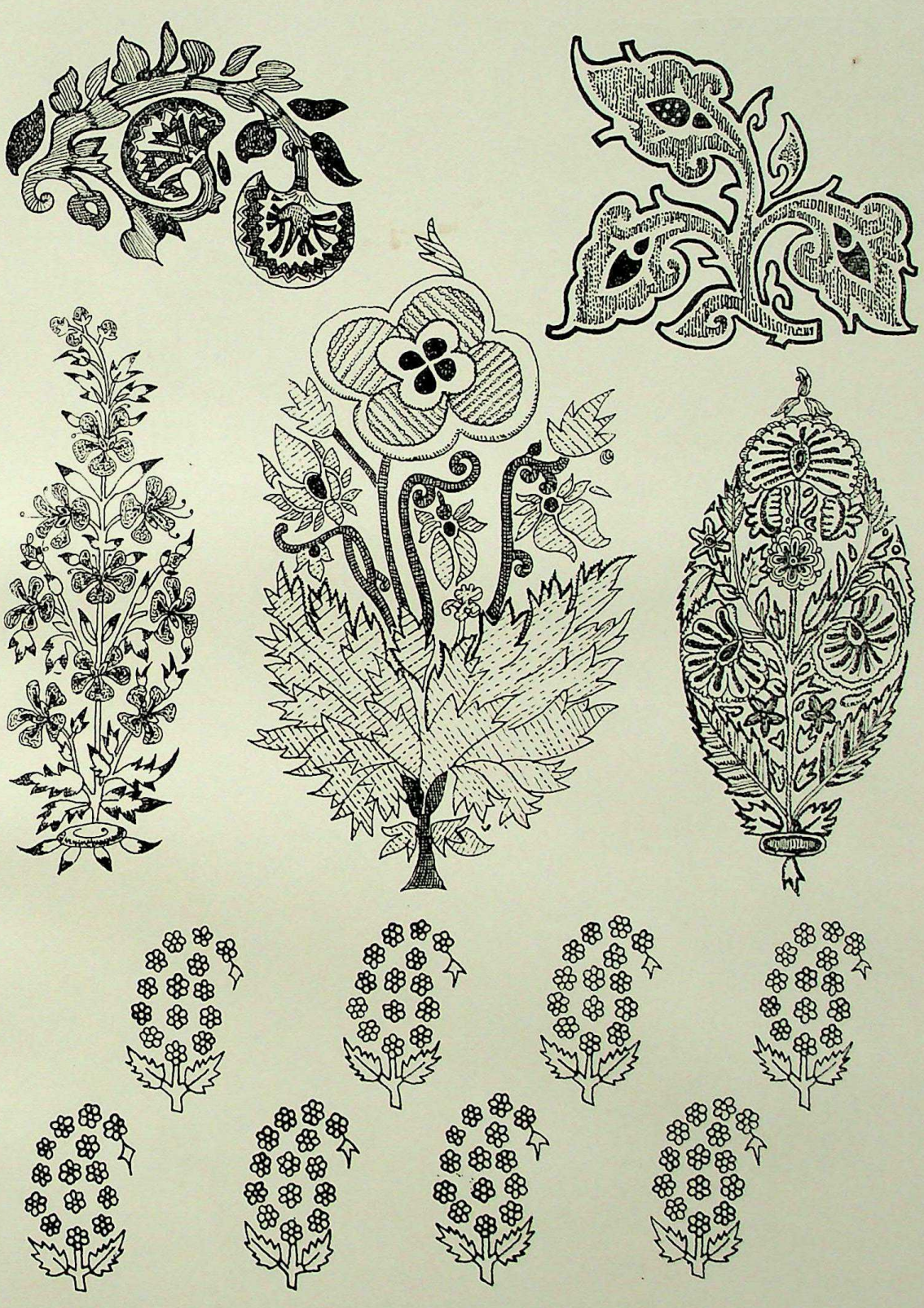
PLATE 1



FLORAL MOTIFS FROM TRADITIONAL INDIAN TEXTILE DESIGNS

The textile designs in the Mughal period and right up to the 19th were not the exclusive property of a particular region, though there was a predilection for particular designs in different regions. Springs and sprays were common as textile designs in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Varanasi (Banaras), and the Deccan in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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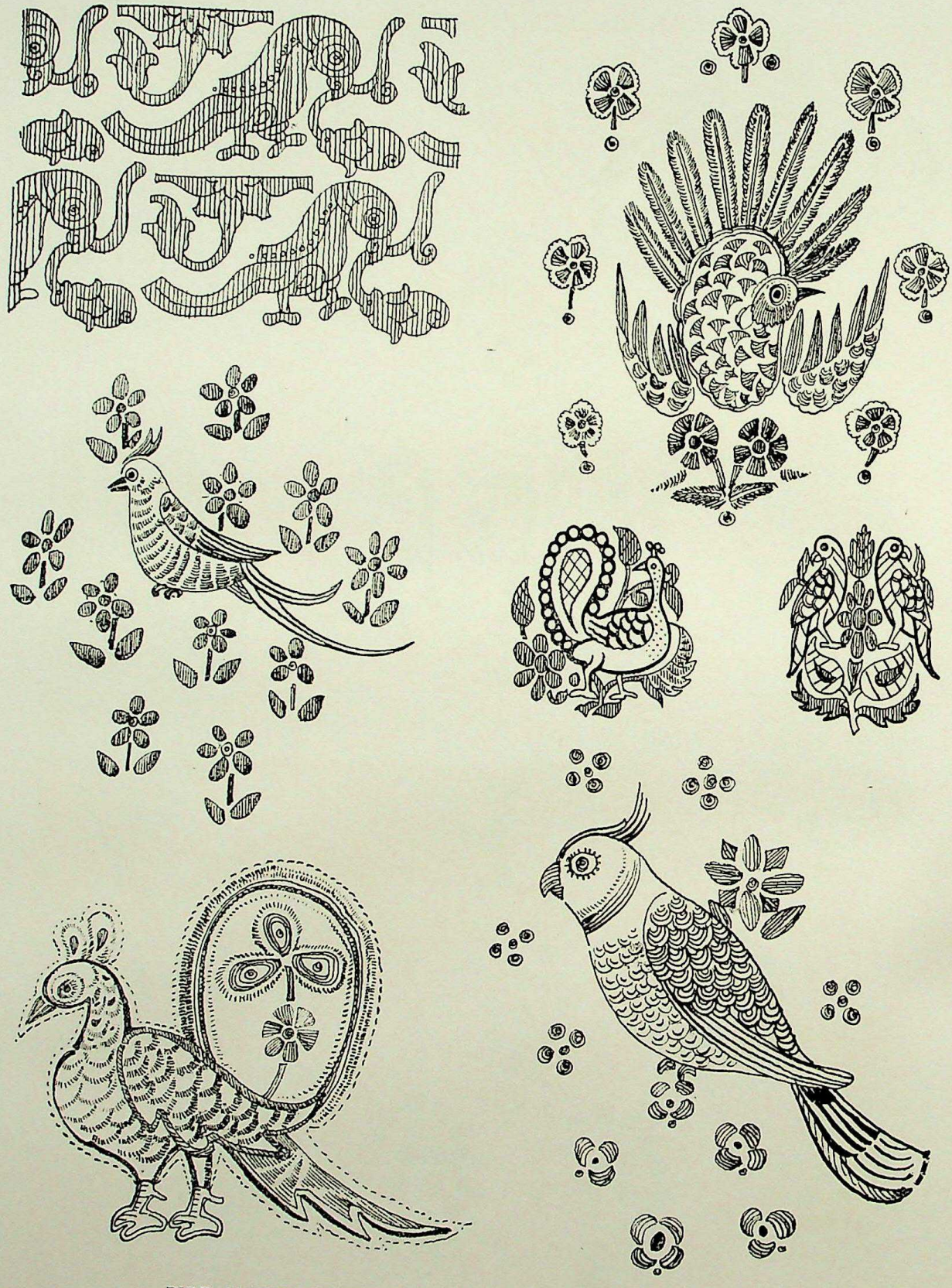

BIRD MOTIFS IN TRADITIONAL INDIAN EMBROIDERY

Parrots and peacocks usually represented in foliages are stylised but easily recognisable. In comparatively modern embroidery naturalistic representations of birds are aimed at.

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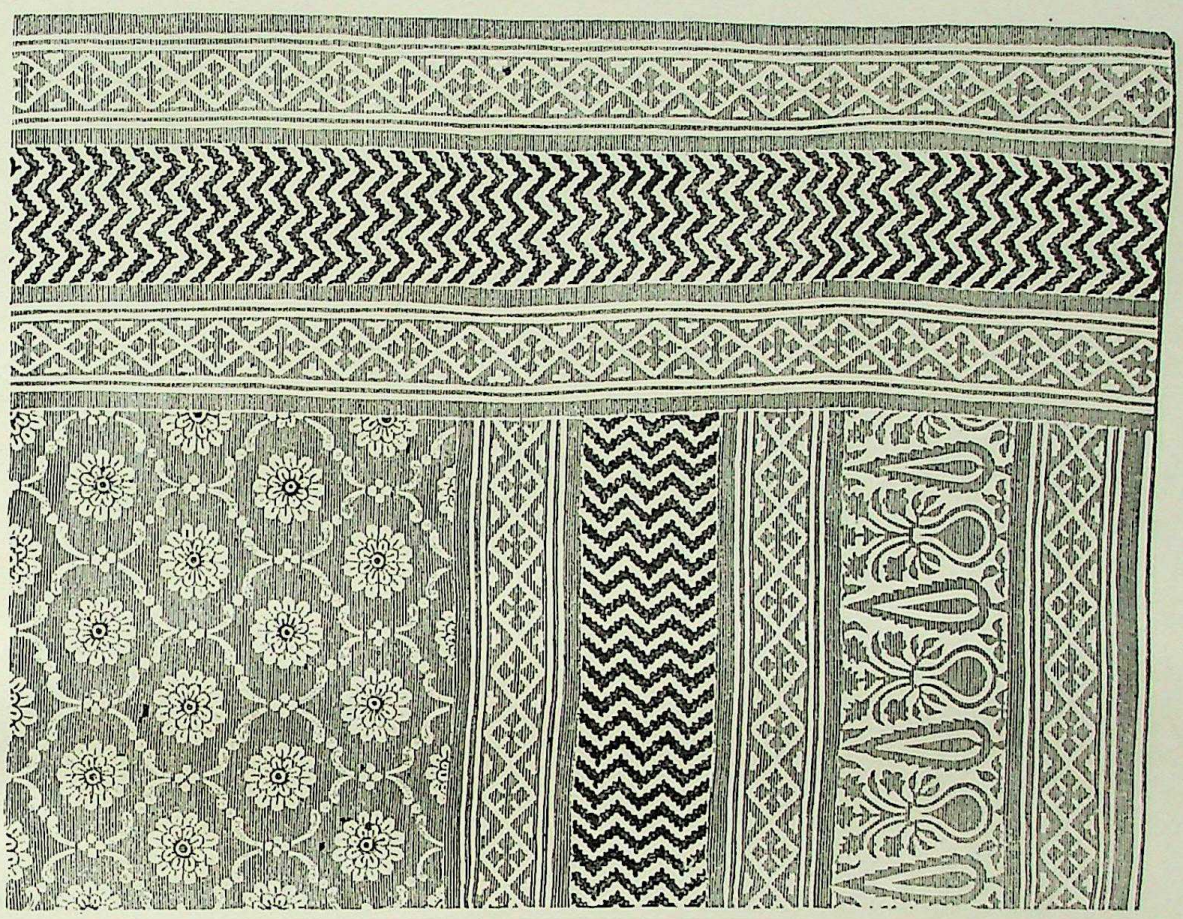
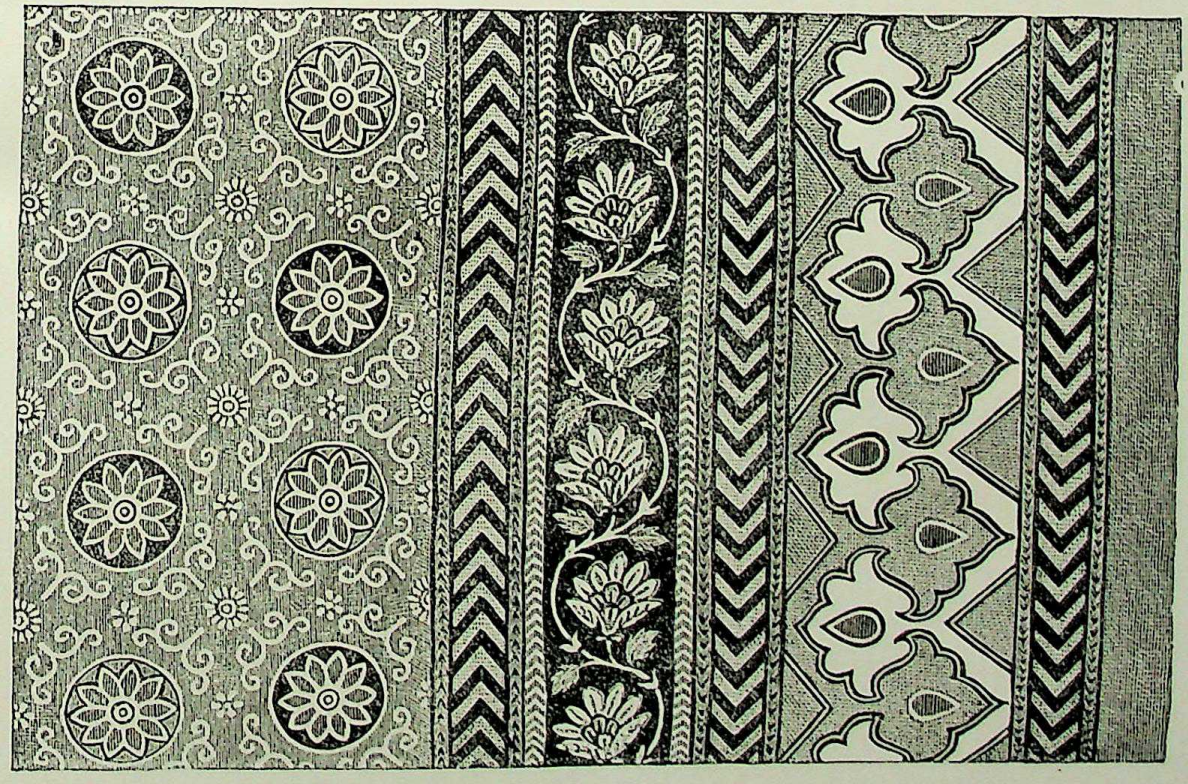
PLATE 3



From Lahore



From Baroda

TWO FINE EXAMPLES OF HAND PRINTED COTTON BED COVERS
(From *Berlin Handbook of Indian Art*)

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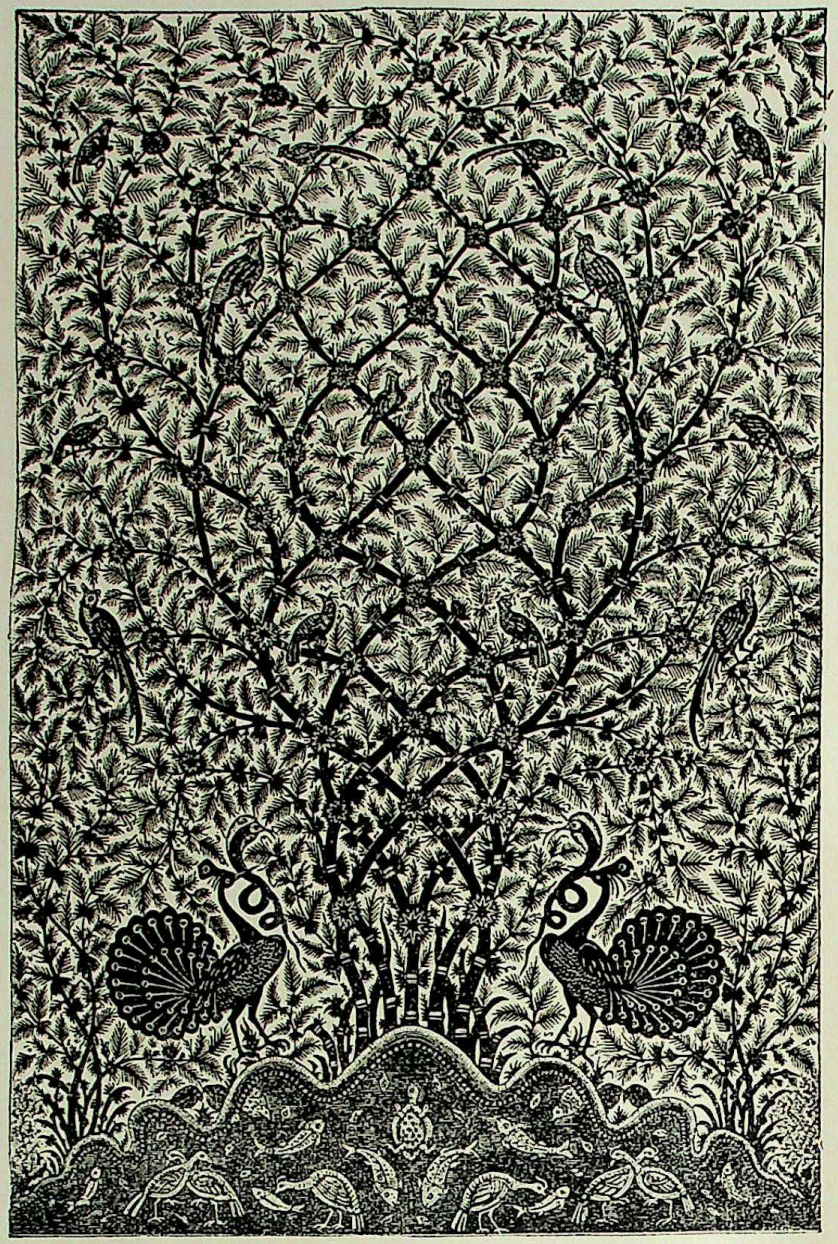
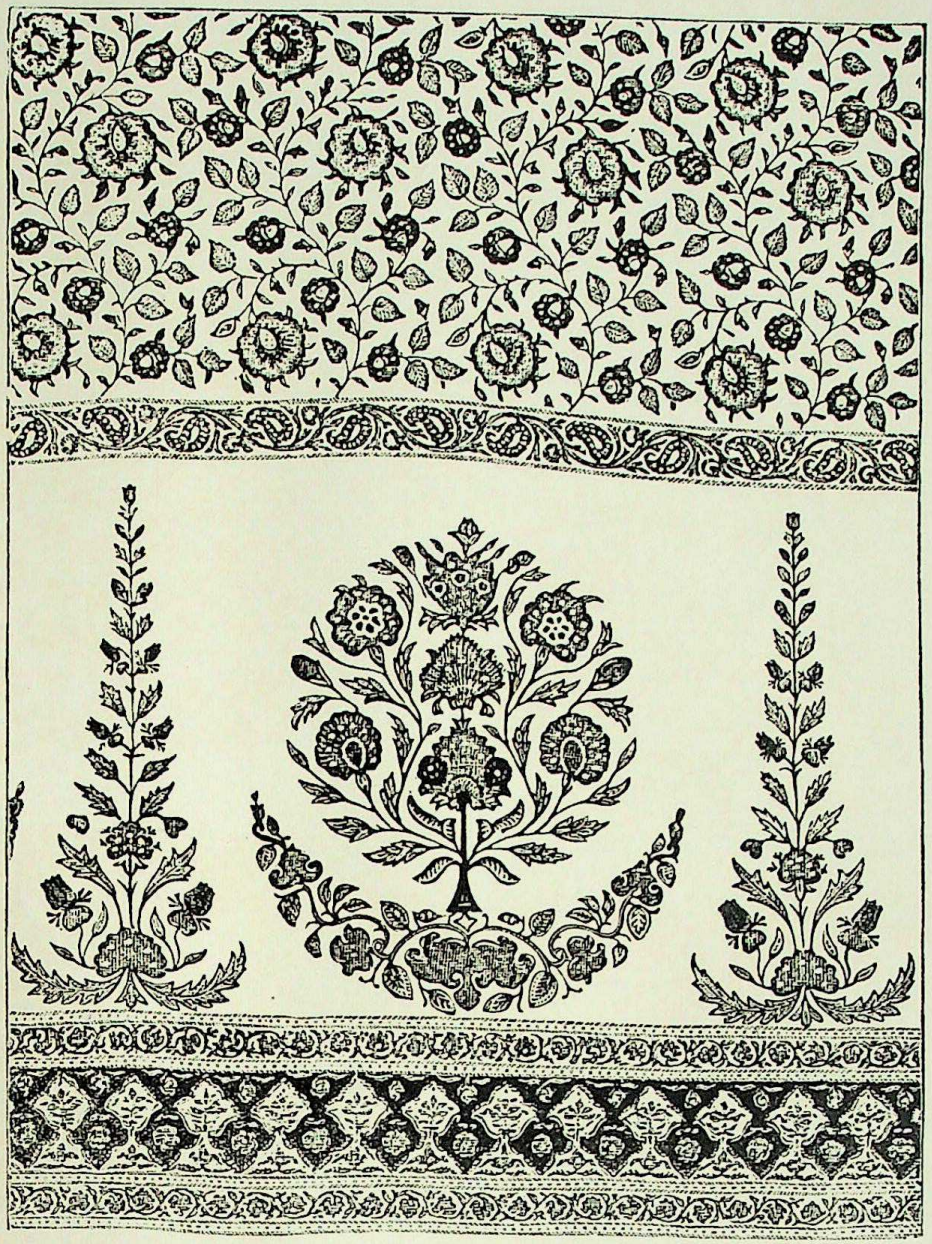


TREE OF LIFE MOTIF ON A MASULIPATAM CHINTZ



HAND PRINTED COTTON BED COVER FROM LUCKNOW

(From *Berlin Handbook of Indian Art*)

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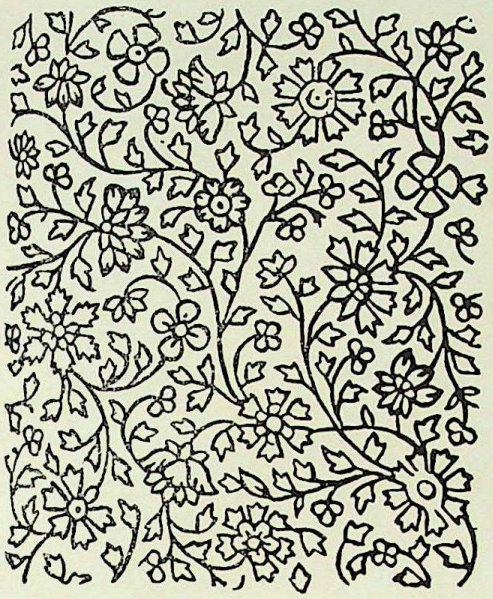
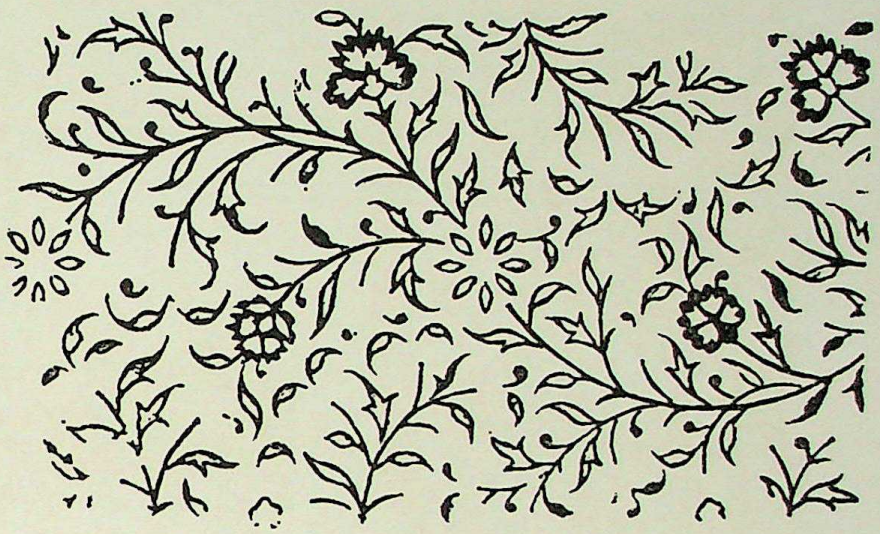
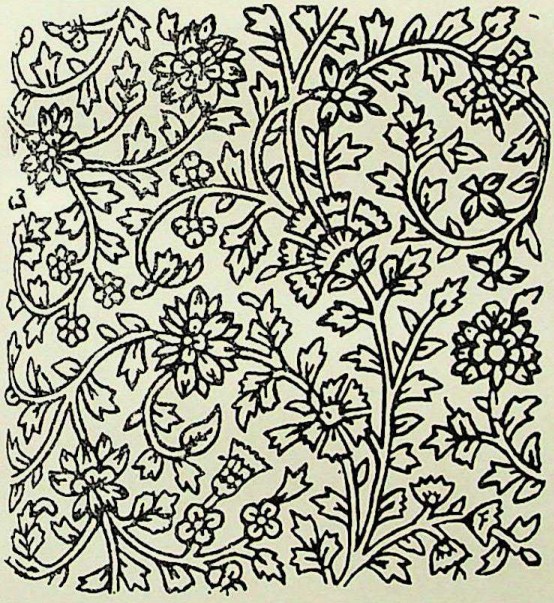
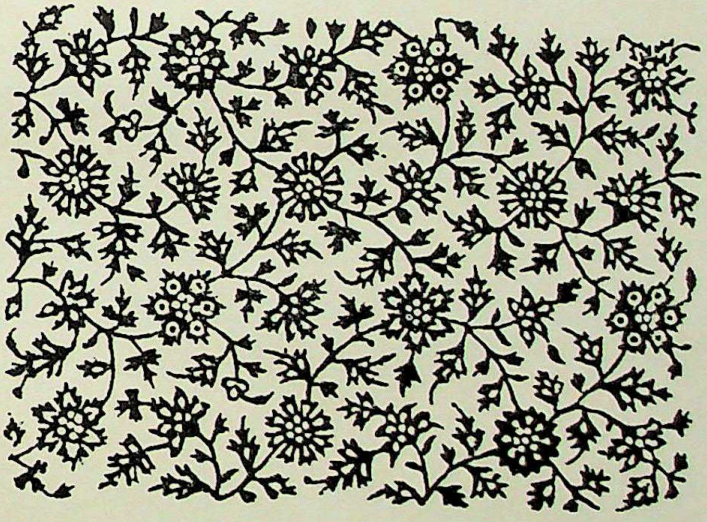
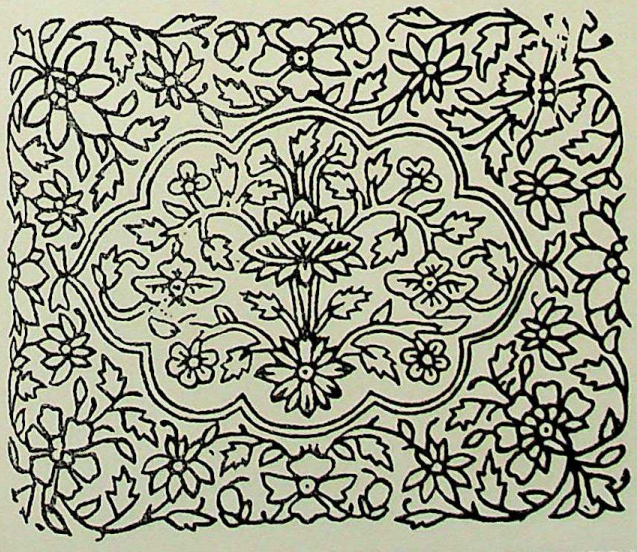
PLATE 5











DESIGNS OF WOOD BLOCKS USED FOR HAND PRINTING ON CLOTH (1)

(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry* Vol. VII)

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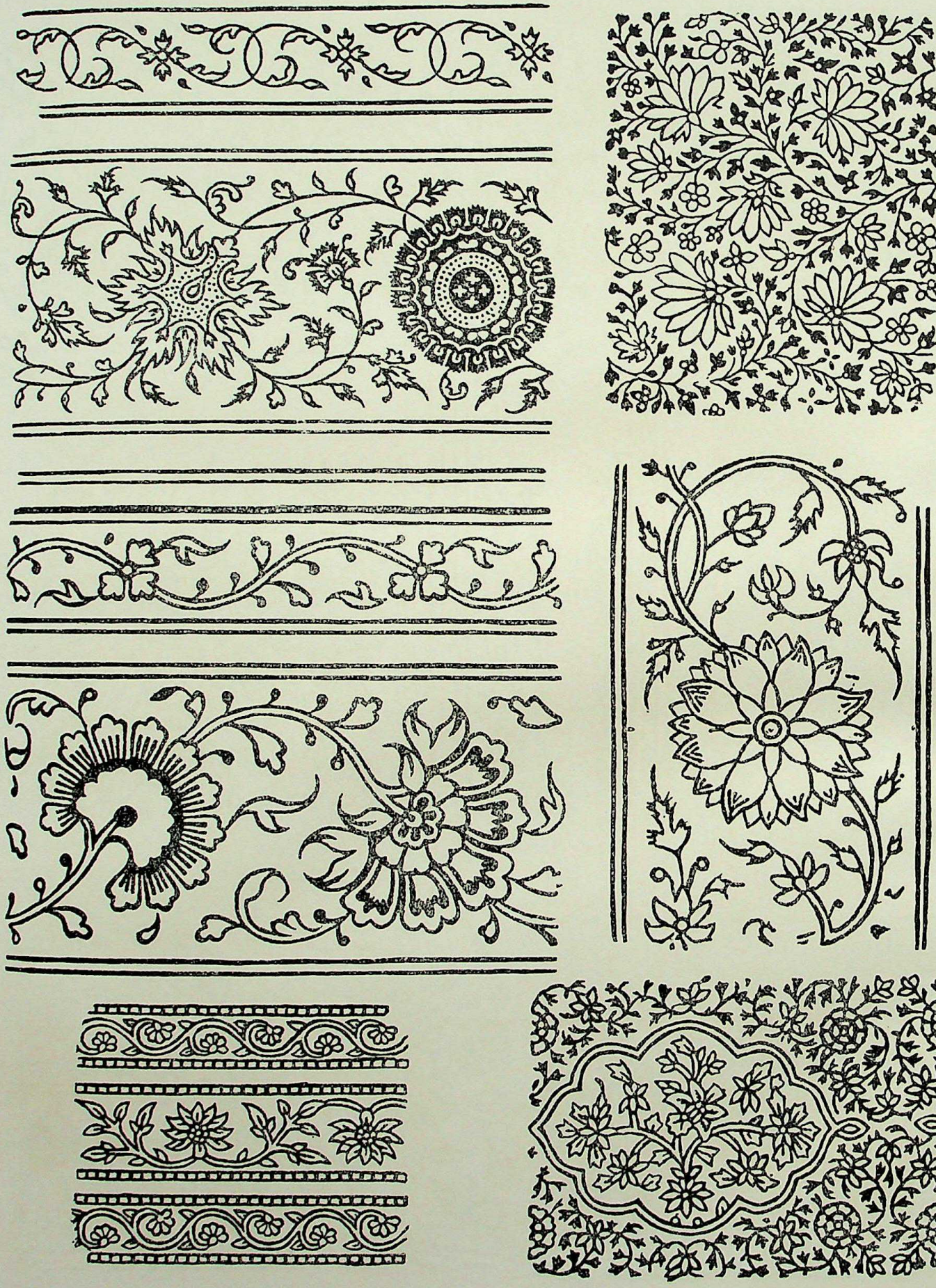

DESIGNS OF WOOD BLOCKS USED FOR HAND PRINTING ON CLOTH (2)

(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. VII)

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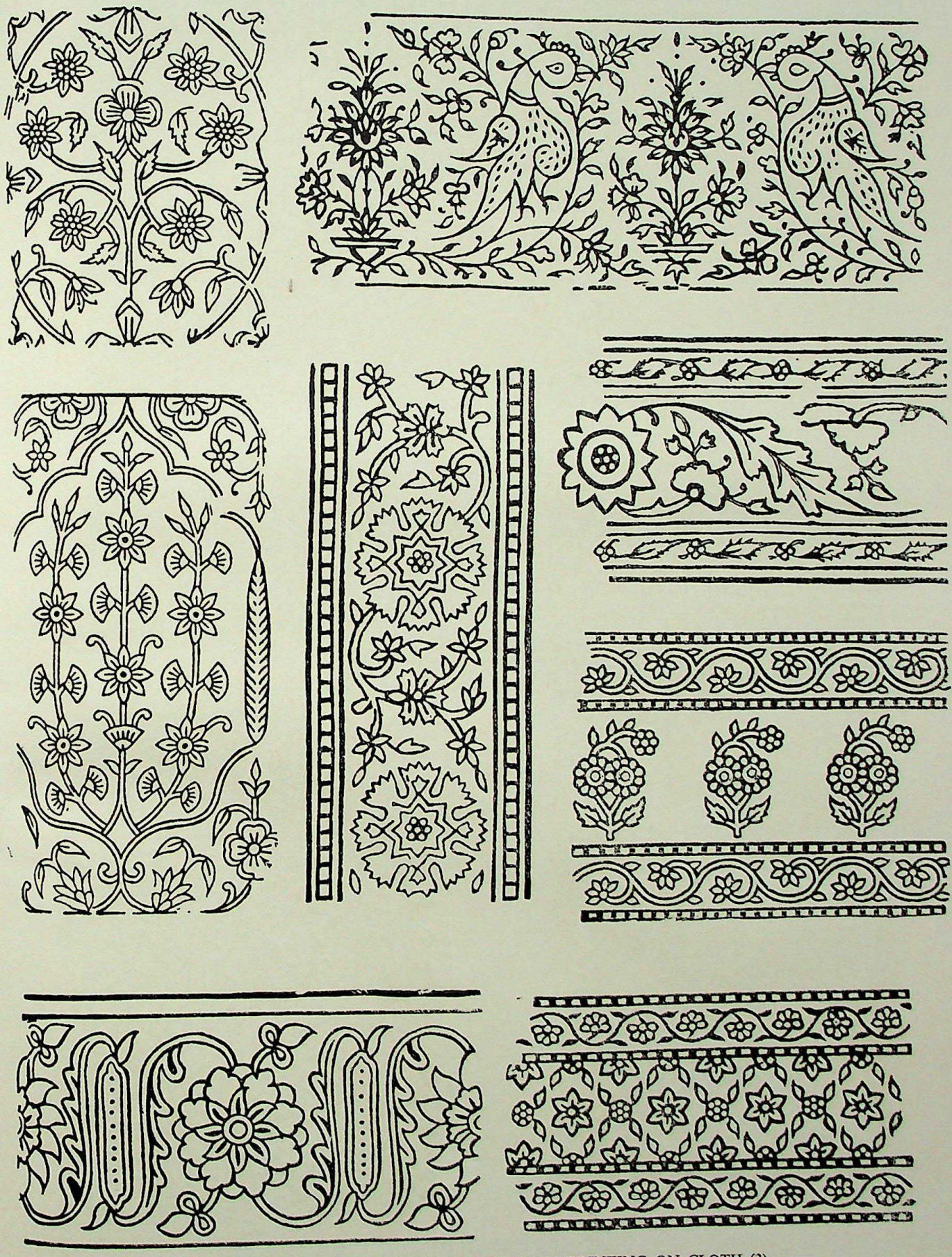
PLATE 7



DESIGNS OF WOOD BLOCKS USED FOR HAND PRINTING ON CLOTH (3)

(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. VII)

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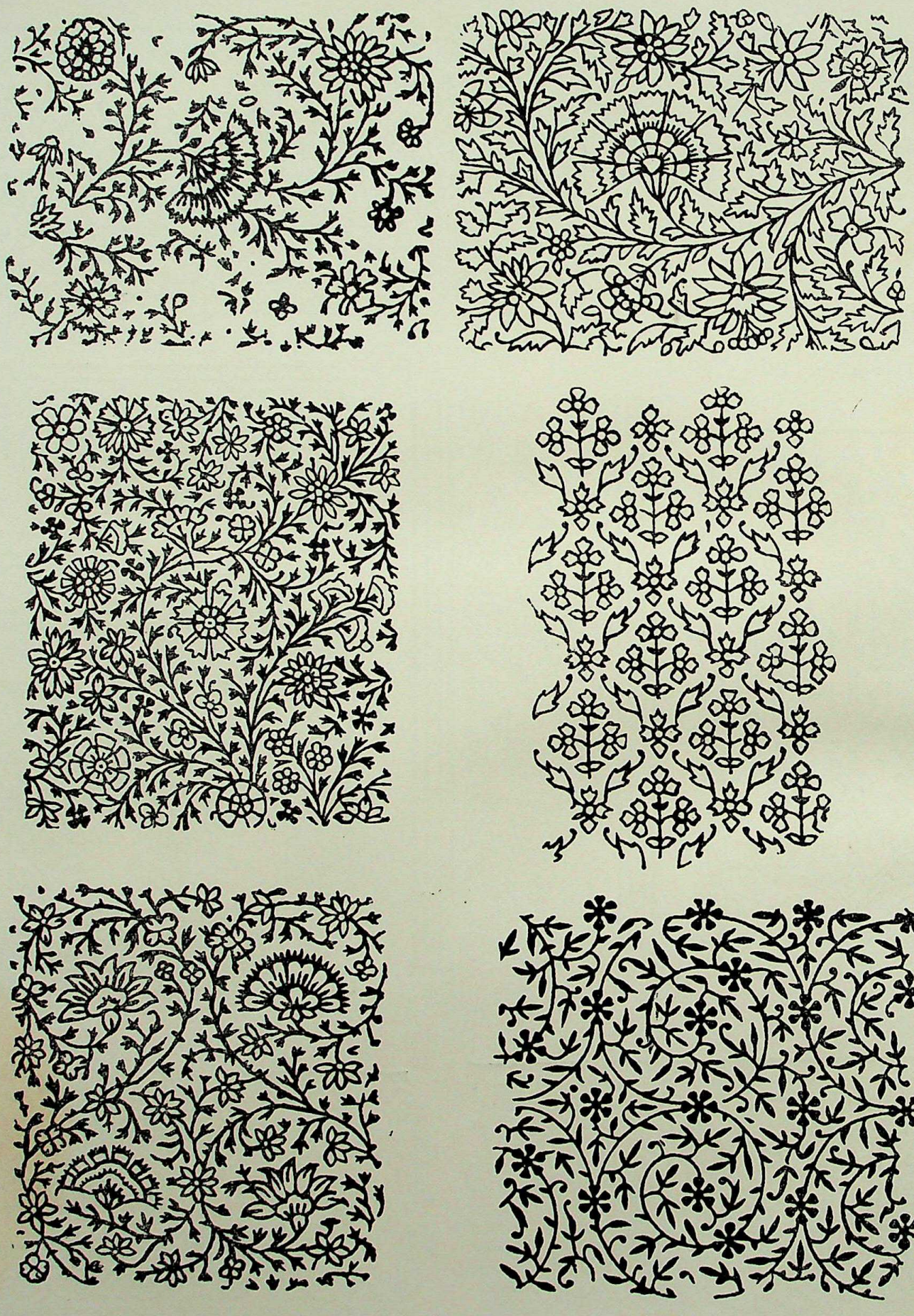

DESIGNS OF WOOD BLOCKS USED IN HAND PRINTING ON CLOTH (4)

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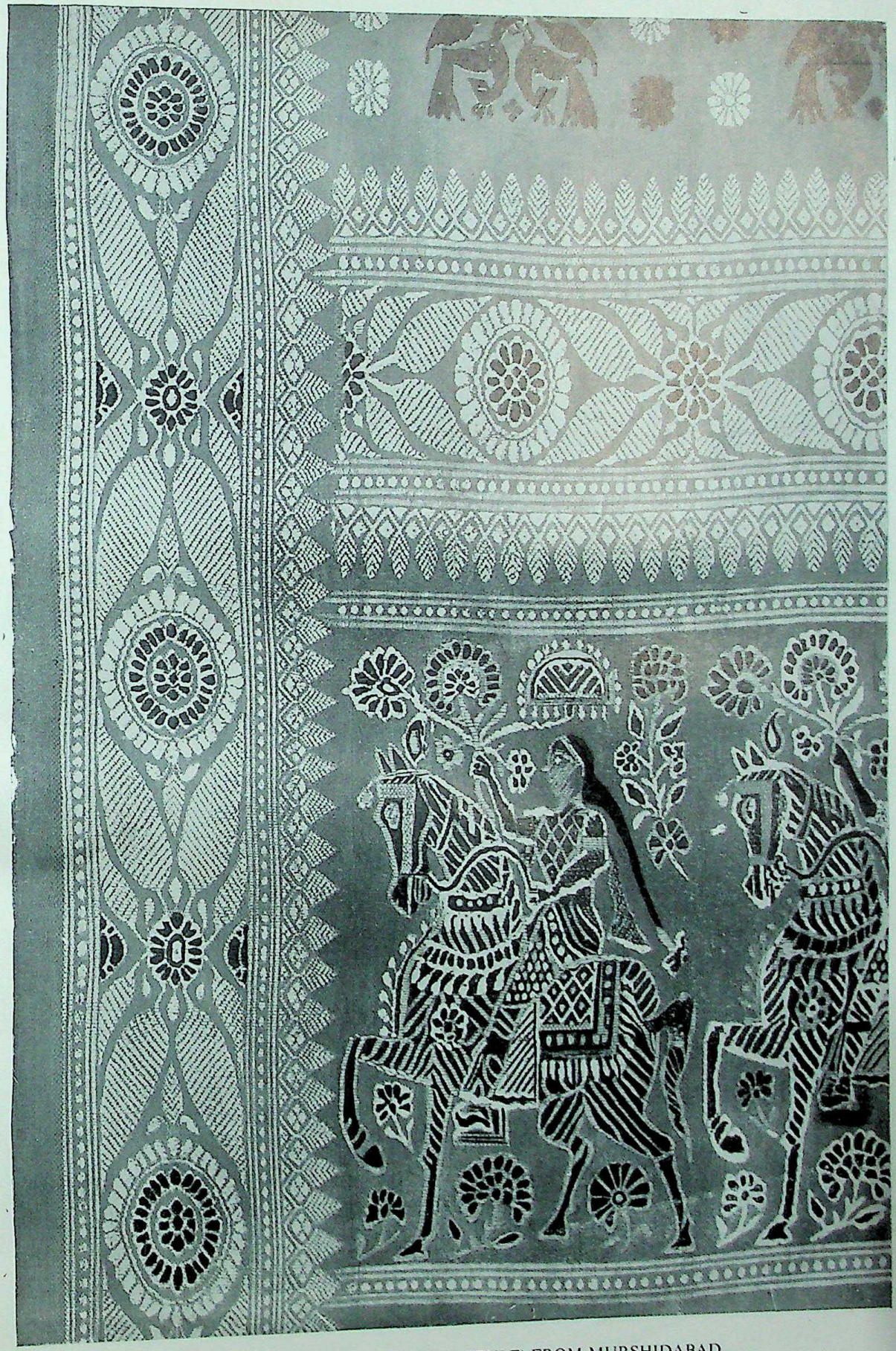

BALUCHAR BUTTIDAR SARI (OLD STYLE) FROM MURSHIDABAD

This is one of the most popular of Bengal textiles and a rarity these days. The field colour is usually a deep purple, and the designs woven with special weft threads of white, red, orange, and green. The weaving is complicated and often requires the help of over fourteen persons

(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. V)

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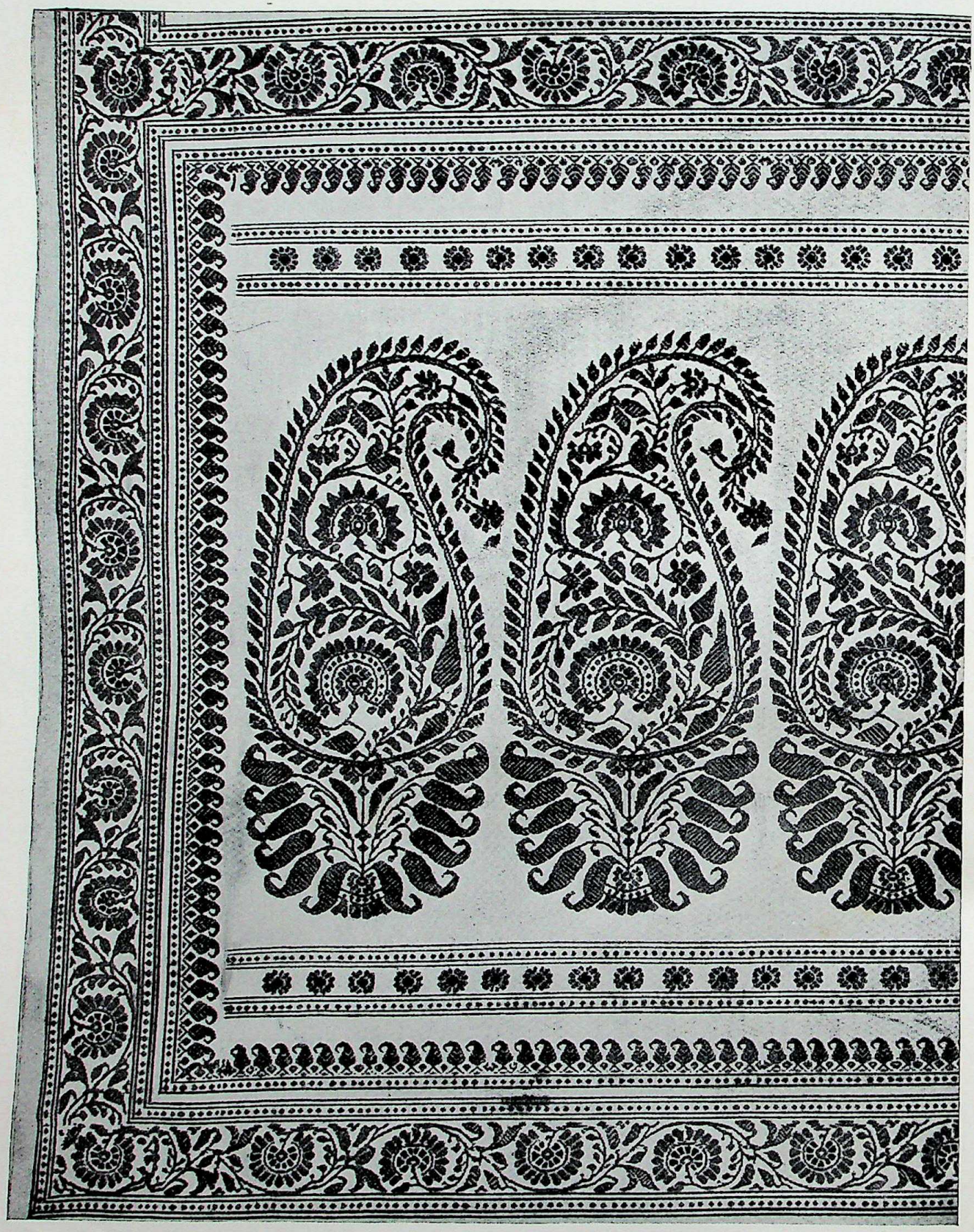

BALUCHAR BUTTIDAR SARI (NEW STYLE) FROM MURSHIDABAD

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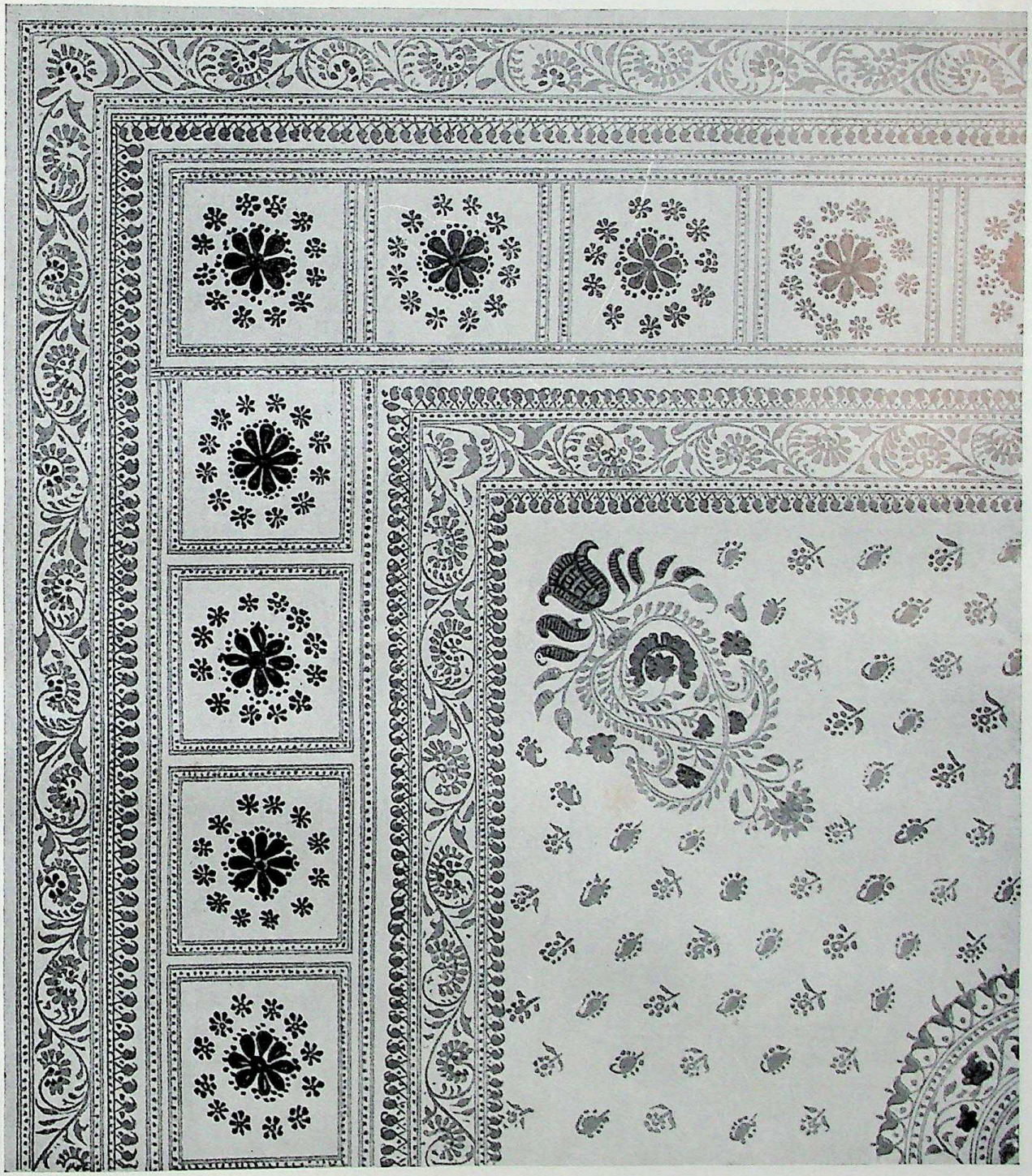

ORNAMENTAL BALUCHAR BUTTIDAR TABLE-COVER WOVEN BY DUBRAJ

(From *A Monograph on the Silk Fabrics of Bengal* by N. G. Mukherji)

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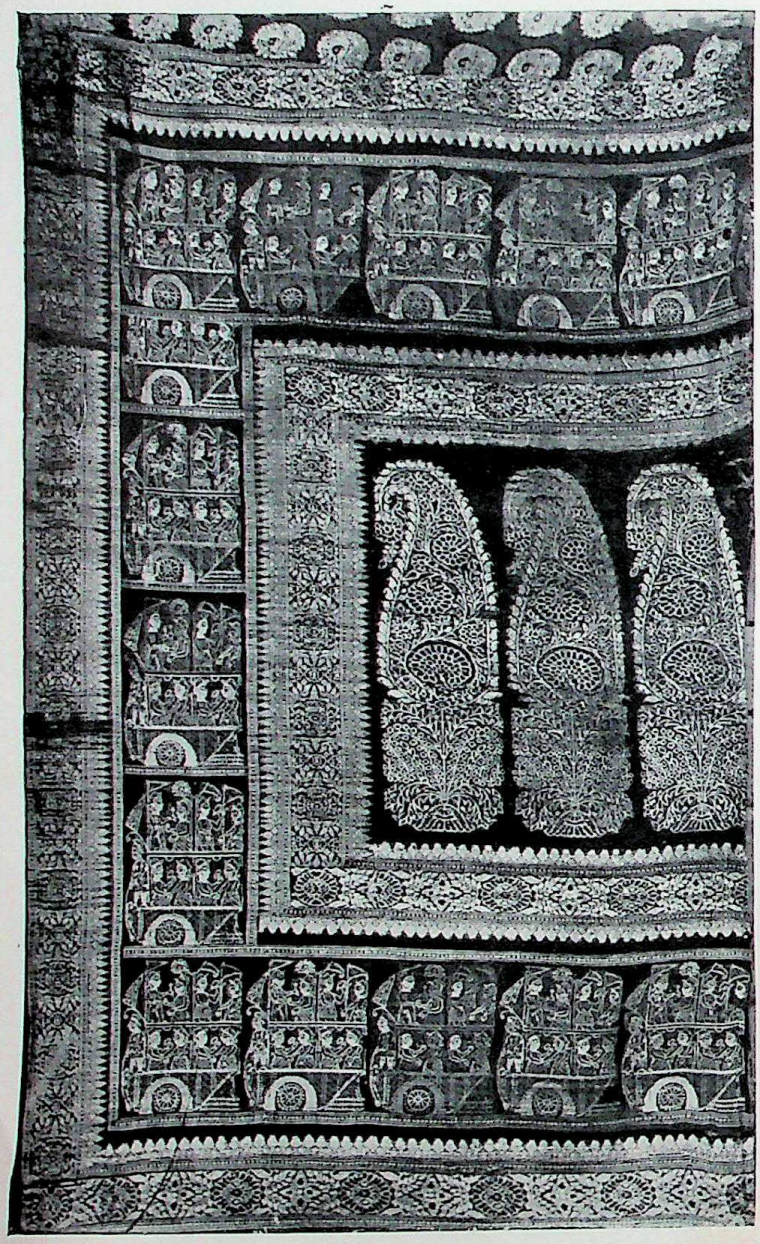
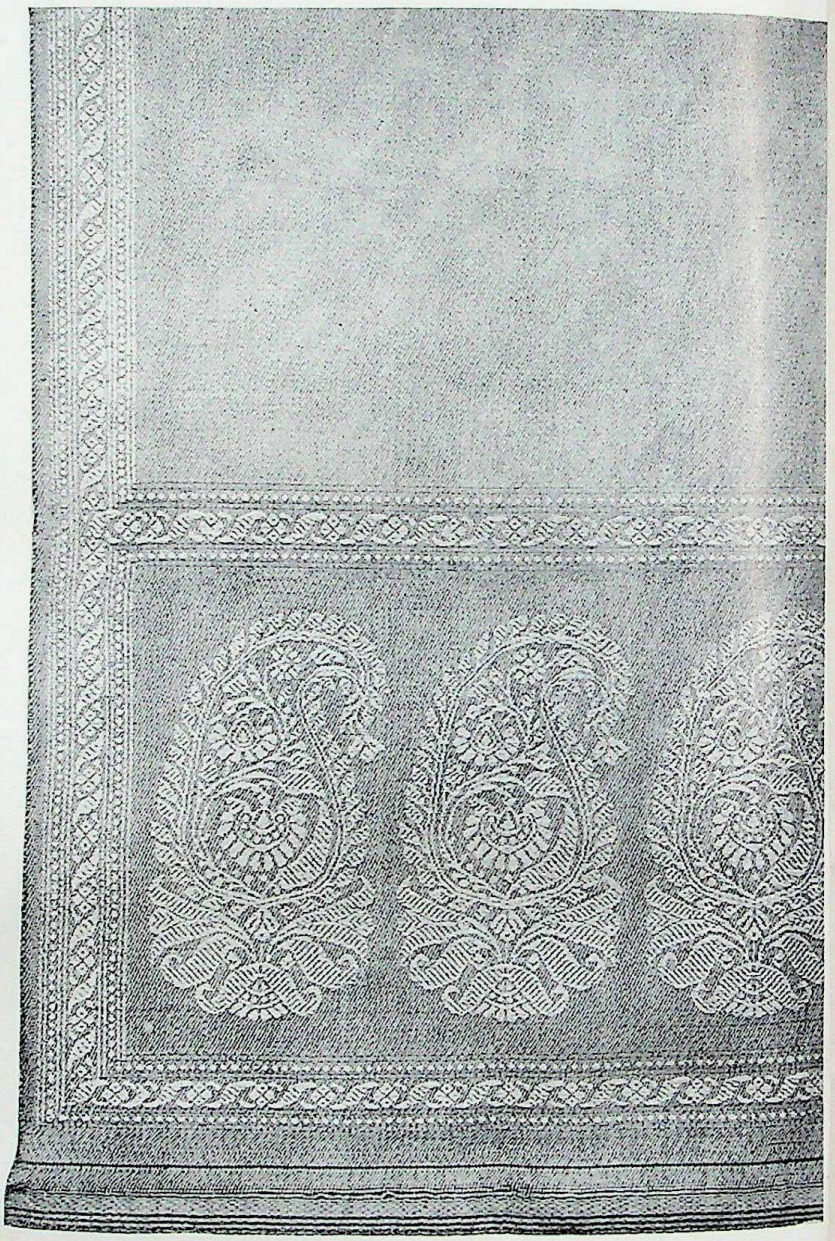


BALUCHAR BUTTIDAR SARI FROM MURSHIDABAD
18th century
(Courtesy, *Bharat Kala Bhavan*)



BALUCHAR BUTTIDAR SCARF WOVEN BY DUBRAJ
(From *A Monograph on the Silk Fabrics of Bengal* by N. G. Mukherji)

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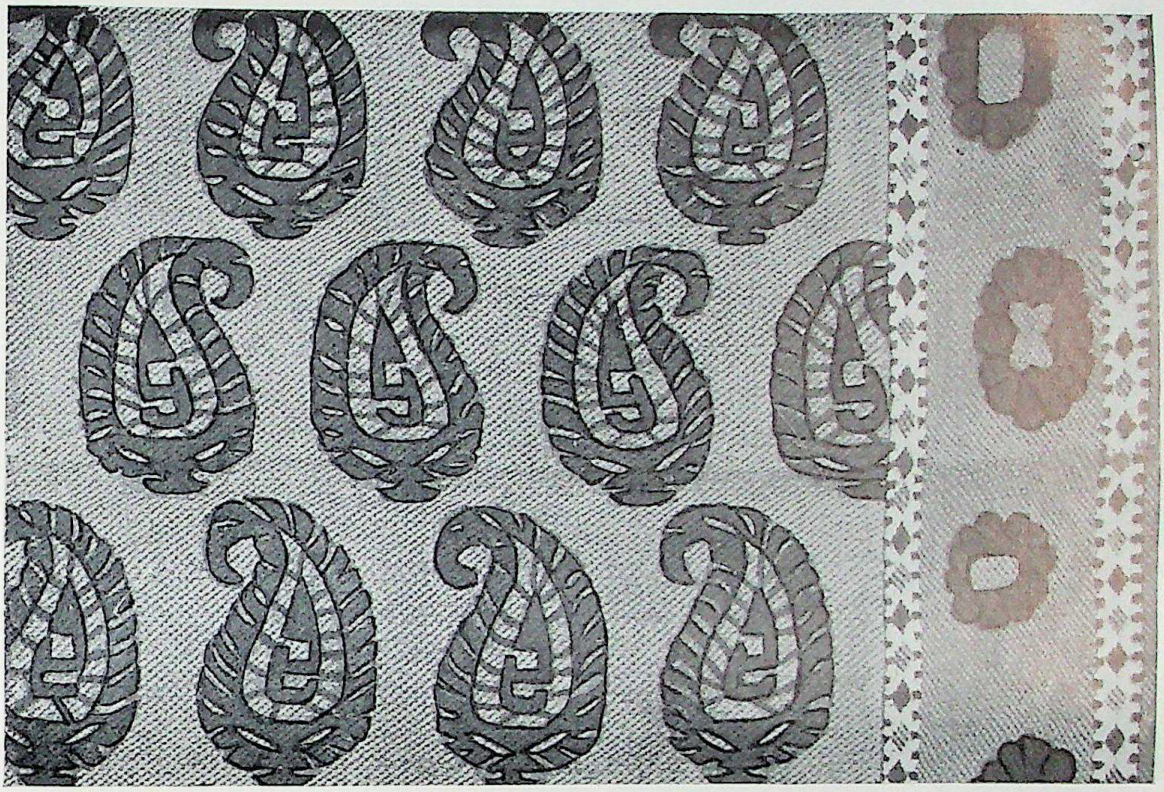
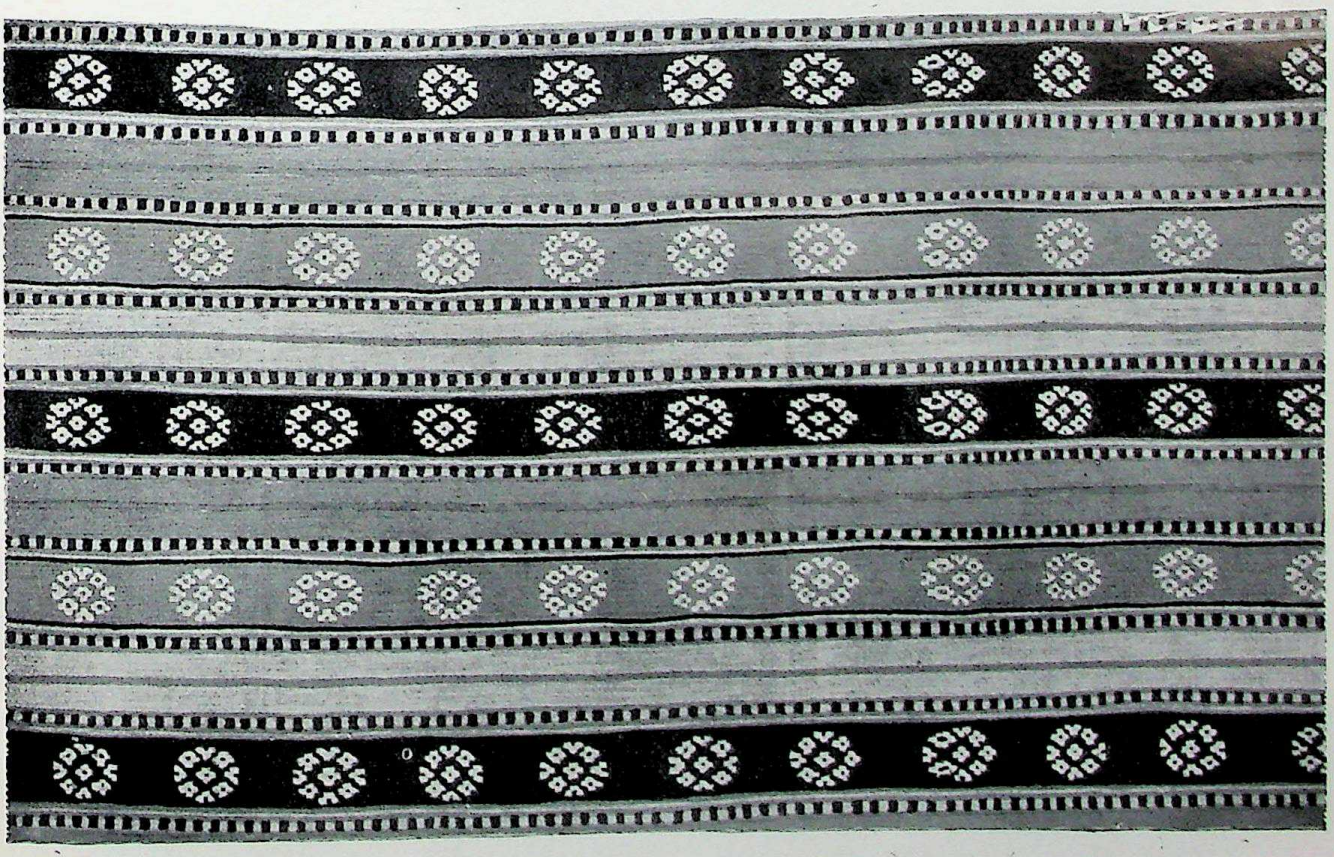


WOVEN SILK SHAWL FROM BANGALORE



SATIN MASHRU

(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*)

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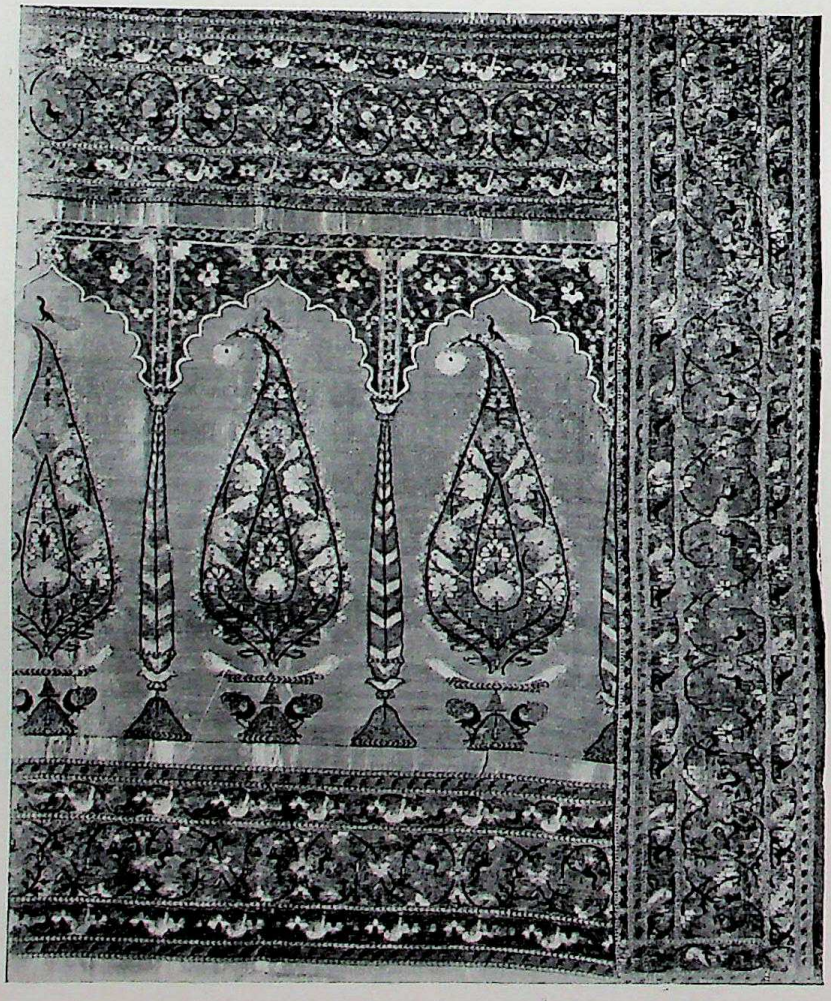
PART OF A FINE
BALUCHAR BUTTIDAR
SILK SARI FROM DACCA

19th century



PAITHAN SARI OF HEAVY
GOLD RAJPUT WORK
FROM POONA

18th century

(Courtesy, *Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery*)

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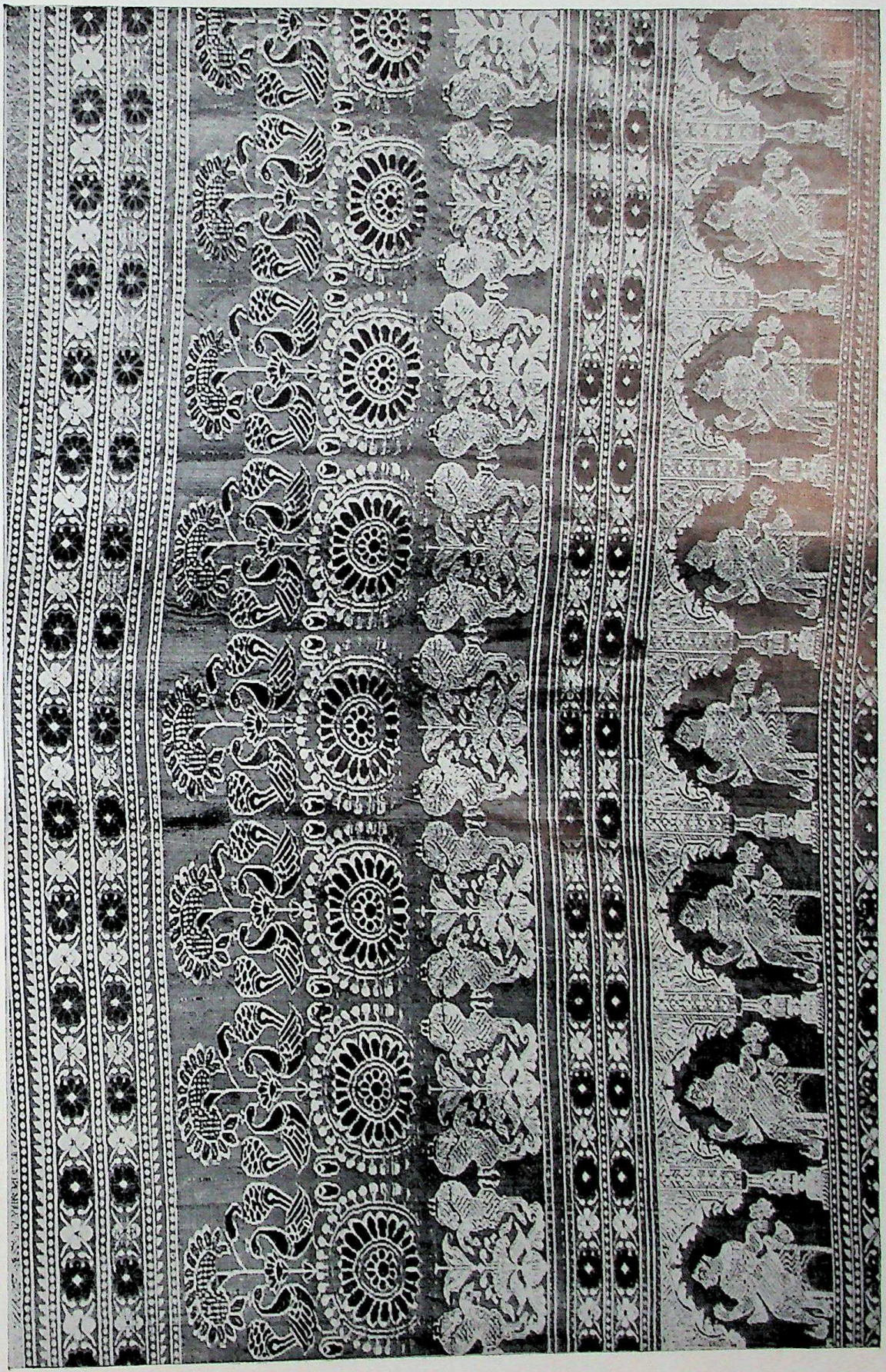

LOVELY SILK SARI FROM MURSHIDABAD

Early 19th century

(Courtesy, *Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery*)

PLATE 16

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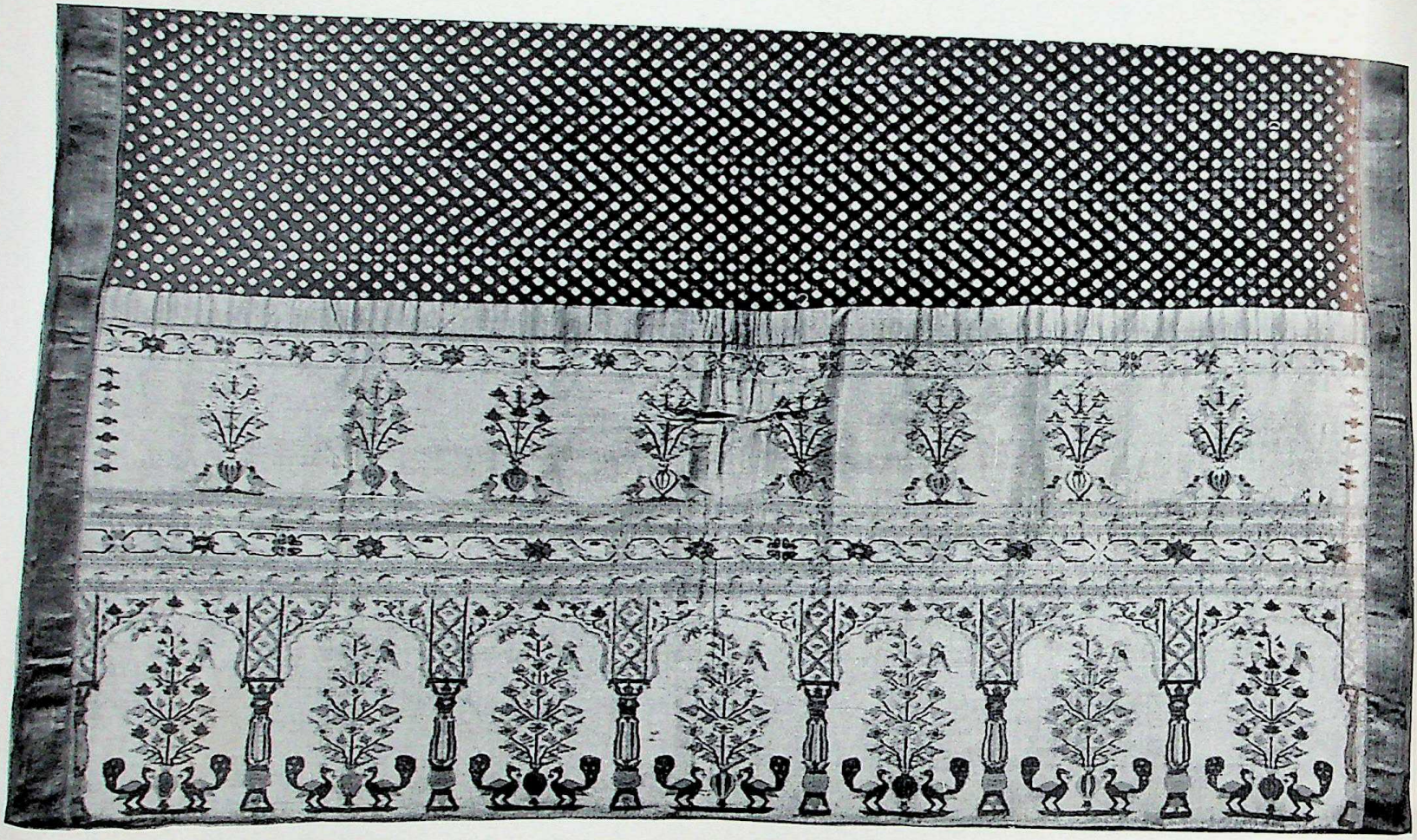

BLACK SILK SARI (PAITHAN) WITH GOLD EMBROIDERY

11 yards long and 57 inches in width, from Burhanpur, a famous centre for silk and gold thread textile manufacture during the Muslim period. This sari was awarded medals and certificates of merit at Delhi and other art exhibitions

(Courtesy, *Central Museum, Nagpur*)

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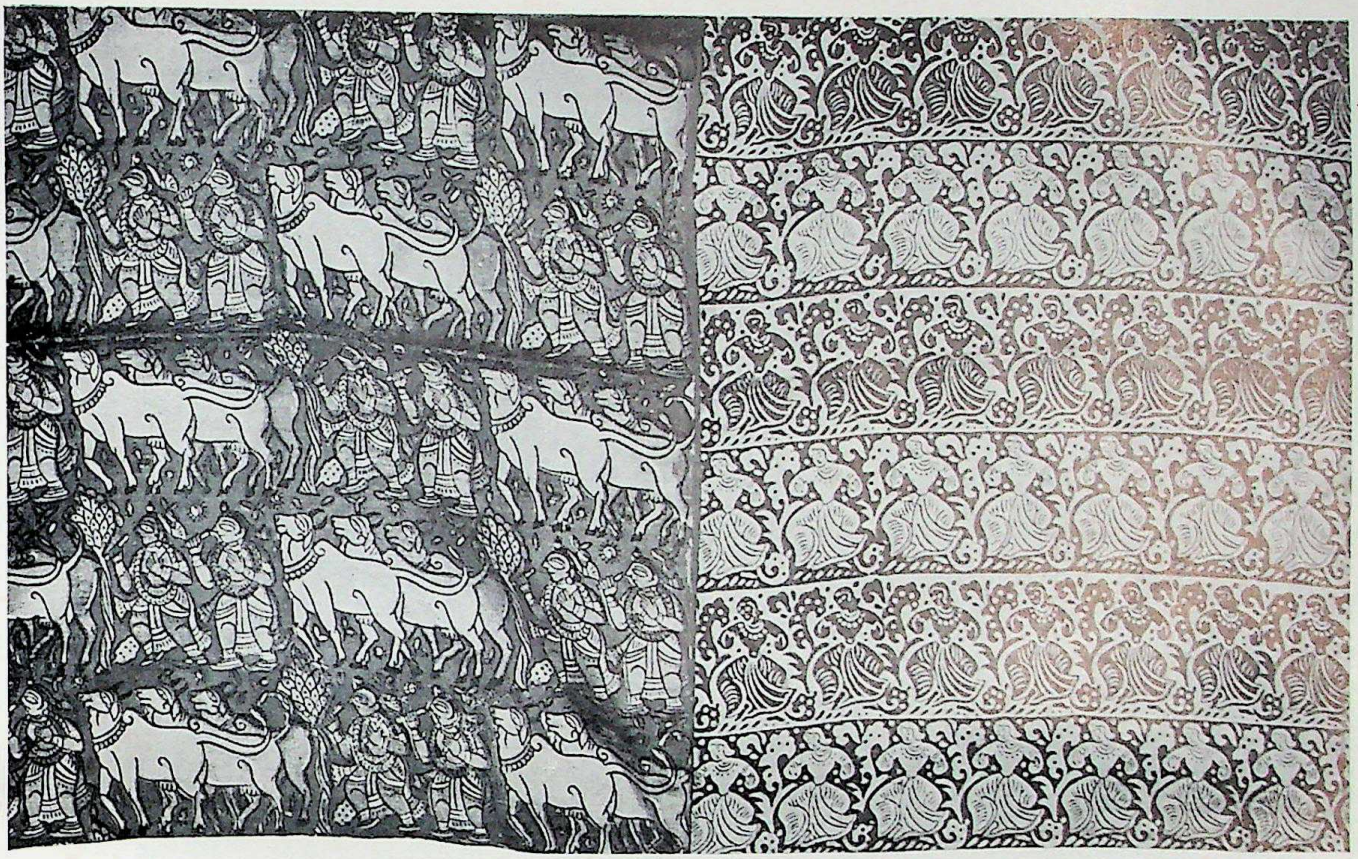

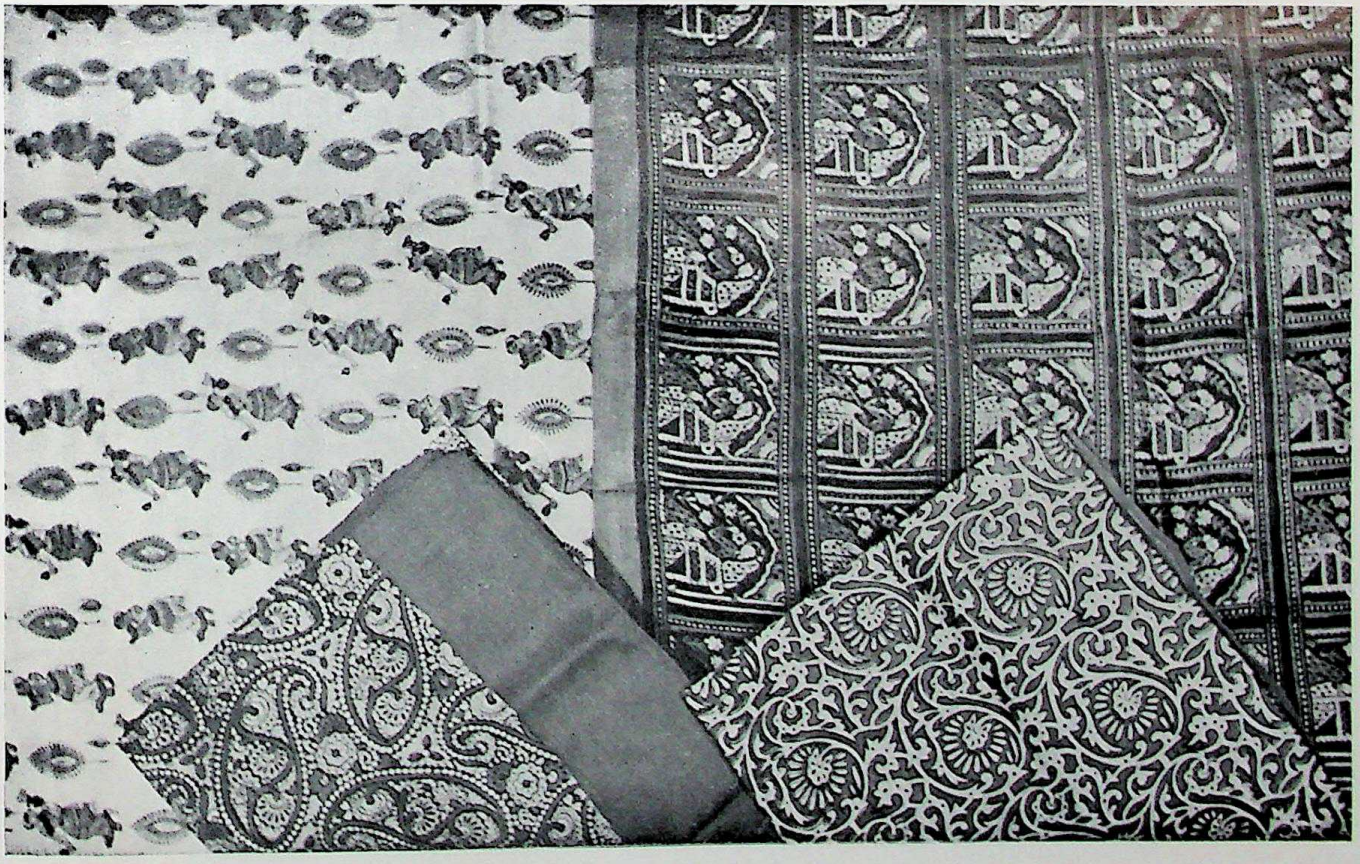

TWO DESIGNS ON BENGAL SILK

(Courtesy, *Home (Publicity) Dept., Government of West Bengal*)

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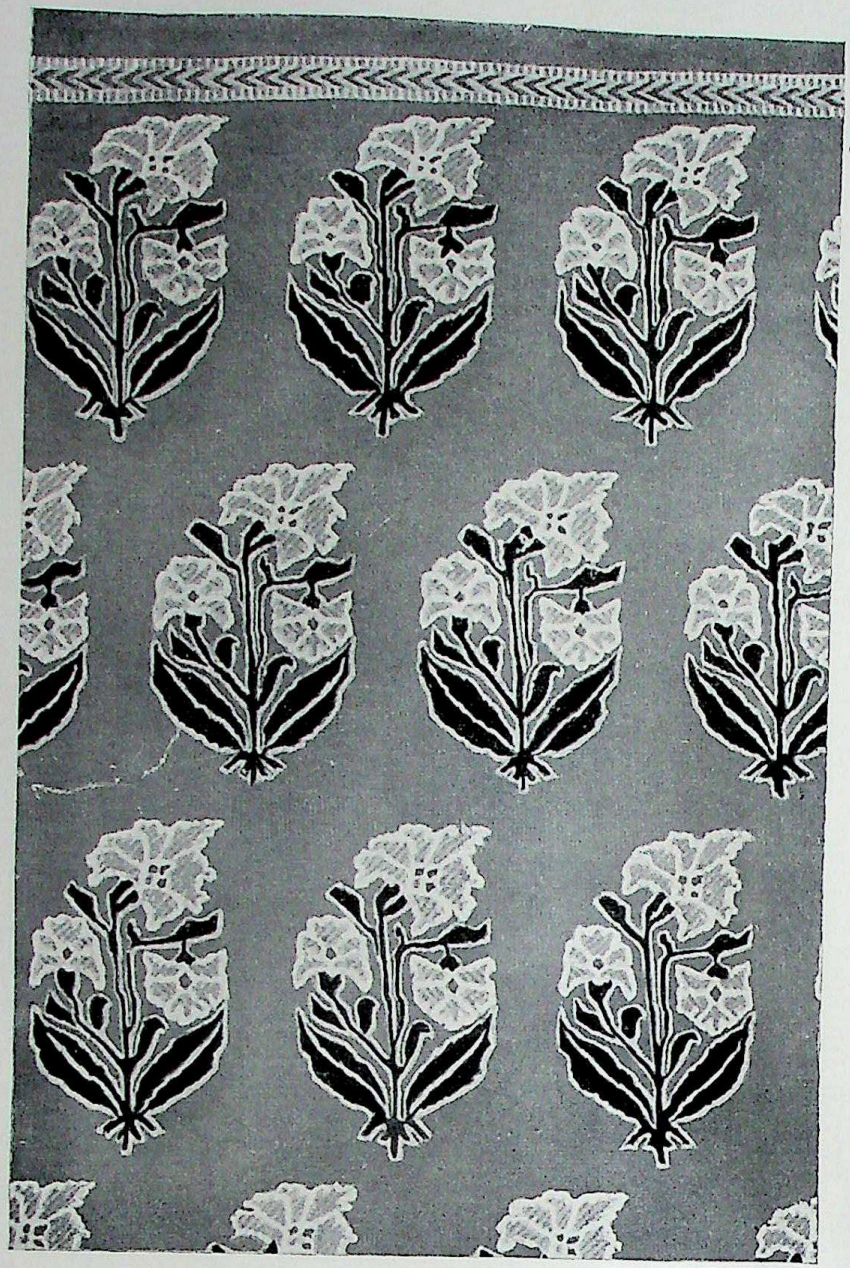
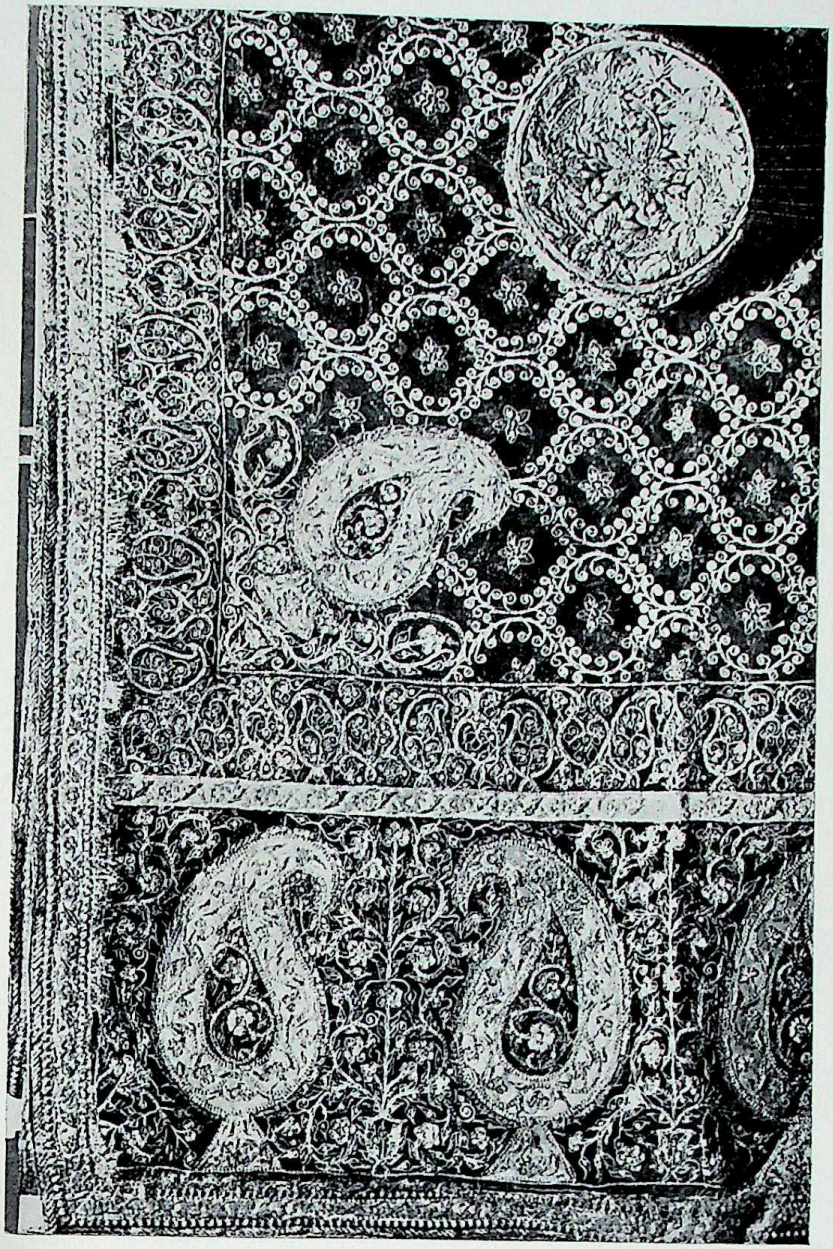


BEAUTIFUL SPECIMEN OF WOVEN SILK FROM MADRAS
(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*)



TRANSLUCENT SILK SARI EMBROIDERED WITH GOLD AND SILVER TINSEL WORK IN LUCKNOW STYLE, PATNA, 19TH CENTURY
(Courtesy, *Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery*)

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HEAVY ROUGH SILK CLOTHS (*VEERALI* or *VEERAKALI*)

About 100 years old, from the Trivandrum palace, probably used as elephant jhools in Travancore

(From *Monograph on the Carpet Weaving Industry of Southern India* by Henry T. Harris)

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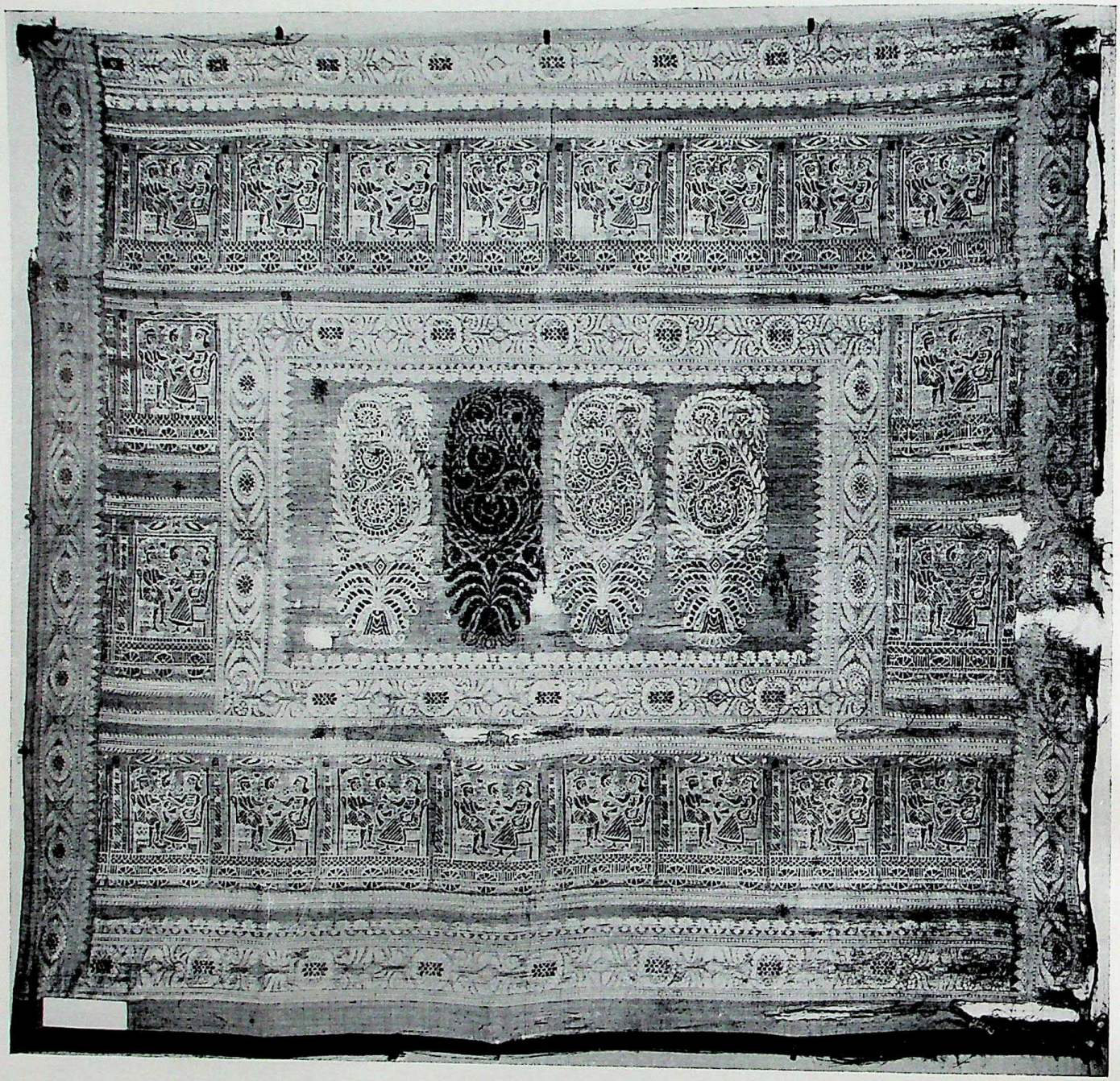

SOFT LILAC-COLOURED SILK SARI FROM BENGAL
19th century A.D.
(Courtesy, *Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery*)

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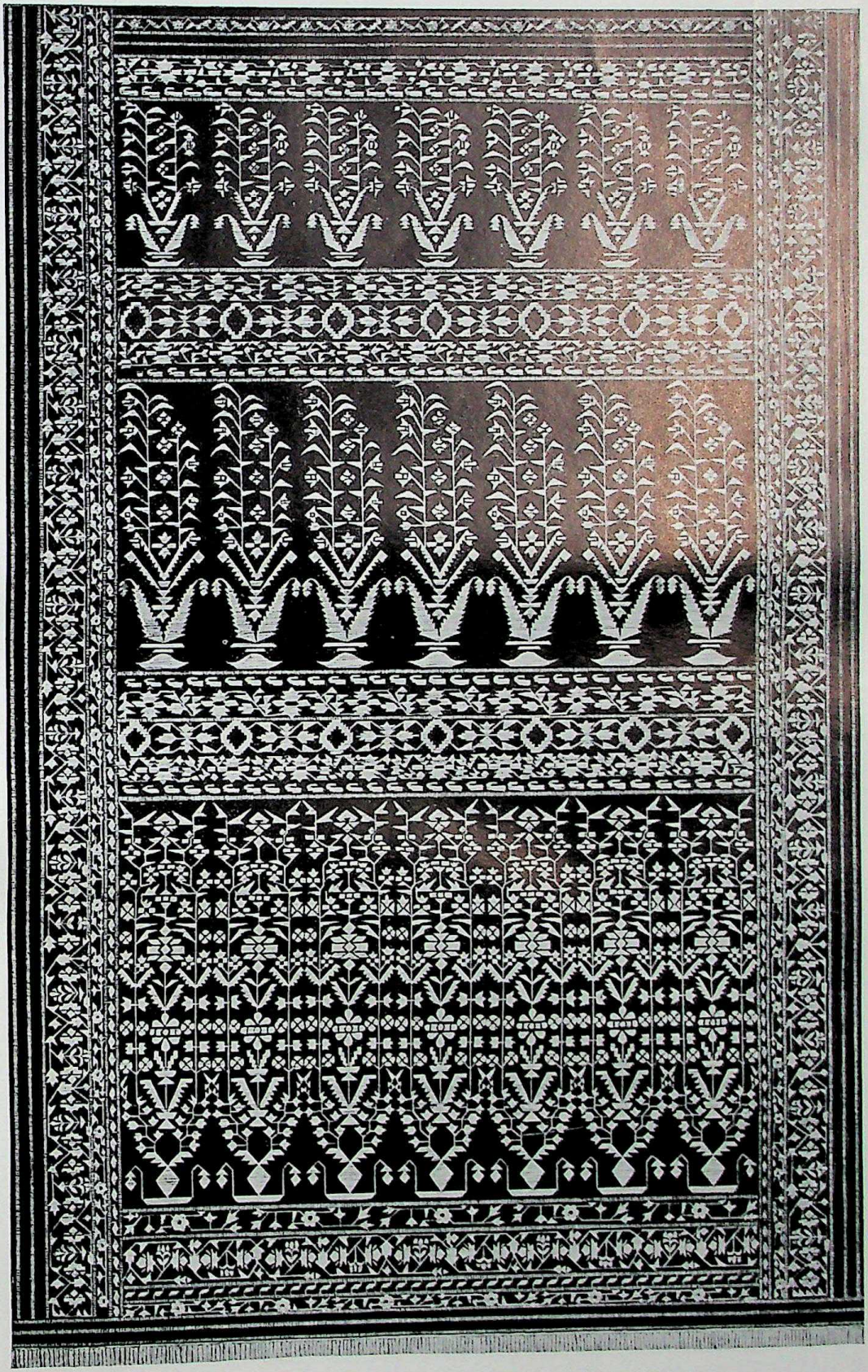

KINKHAB DESIGN IN WHITE SILK AND GOLD THREAD

(From *Industrial Arts of the XIXth Century at the Great Exhibition* by M. Digby Wyatt)

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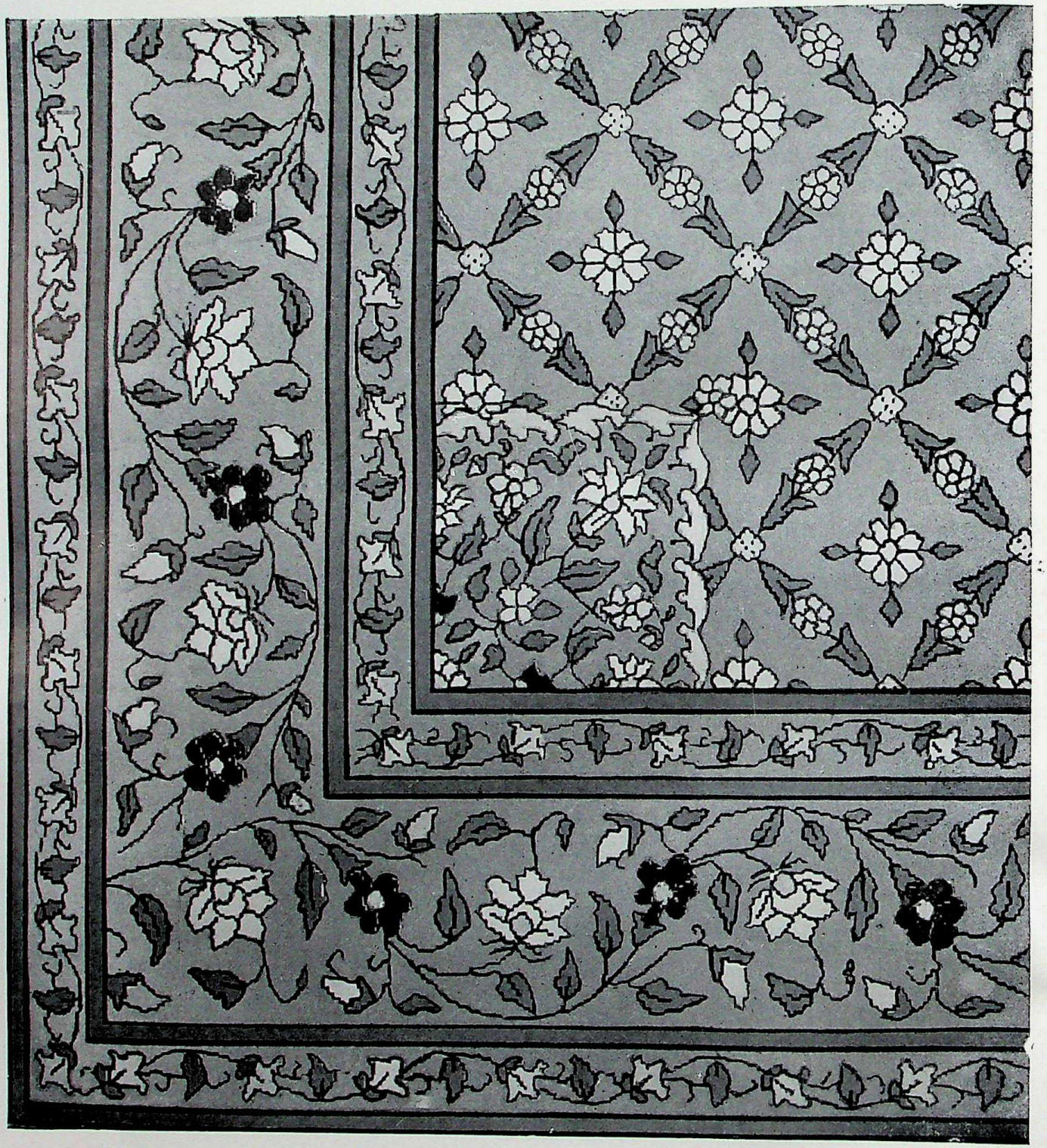

SPECIMEN OF KINKHAB FROM AHMADABAD

This is a corner of a square piece

(From *Industrial Arts of the XIXth Century at the Great Exhibition* by M. Digby Wyatt)

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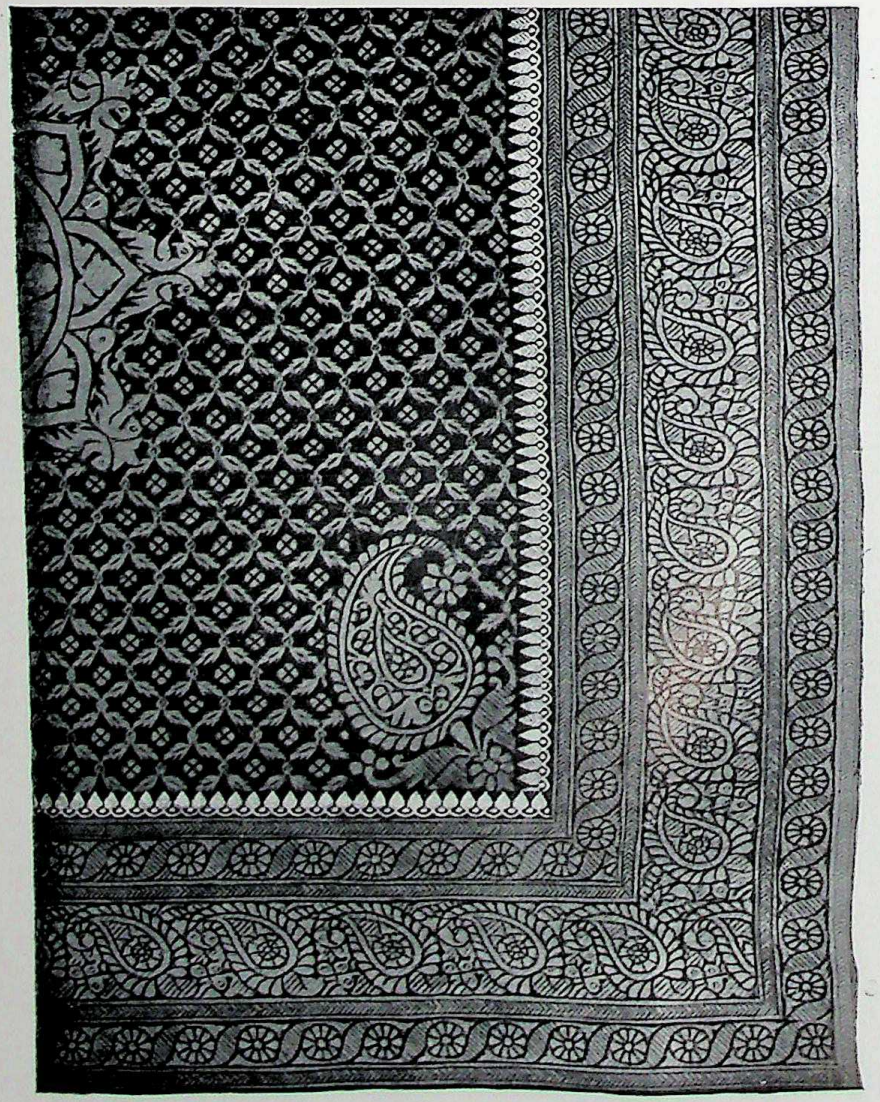
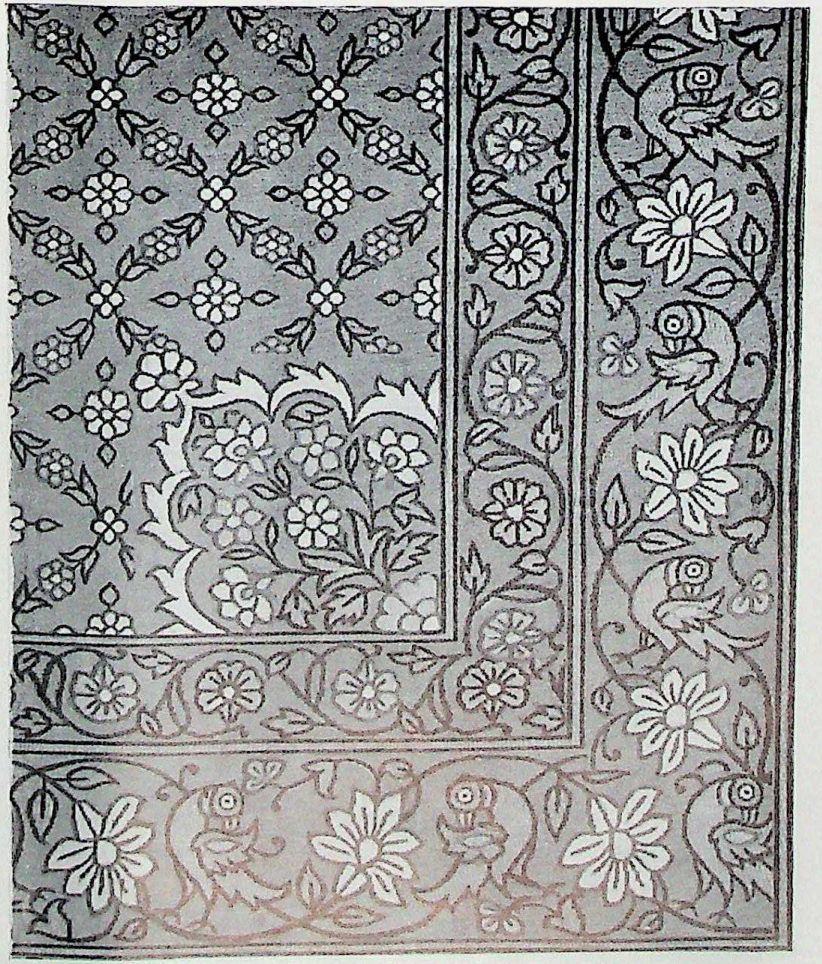


BANARASI KINKHAB (*PAU KOTHAMA CHARDENI DESIGN*)



KINKHAB TABLE-COVER FROM AHMADABAD

In gold and silver interspersed with purple, green, and red silk on a black background. The design in the centre is called 'tara mandal' or constellation of stars. The border is known as 'popat-vela'—a creeper with parrots

(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*)

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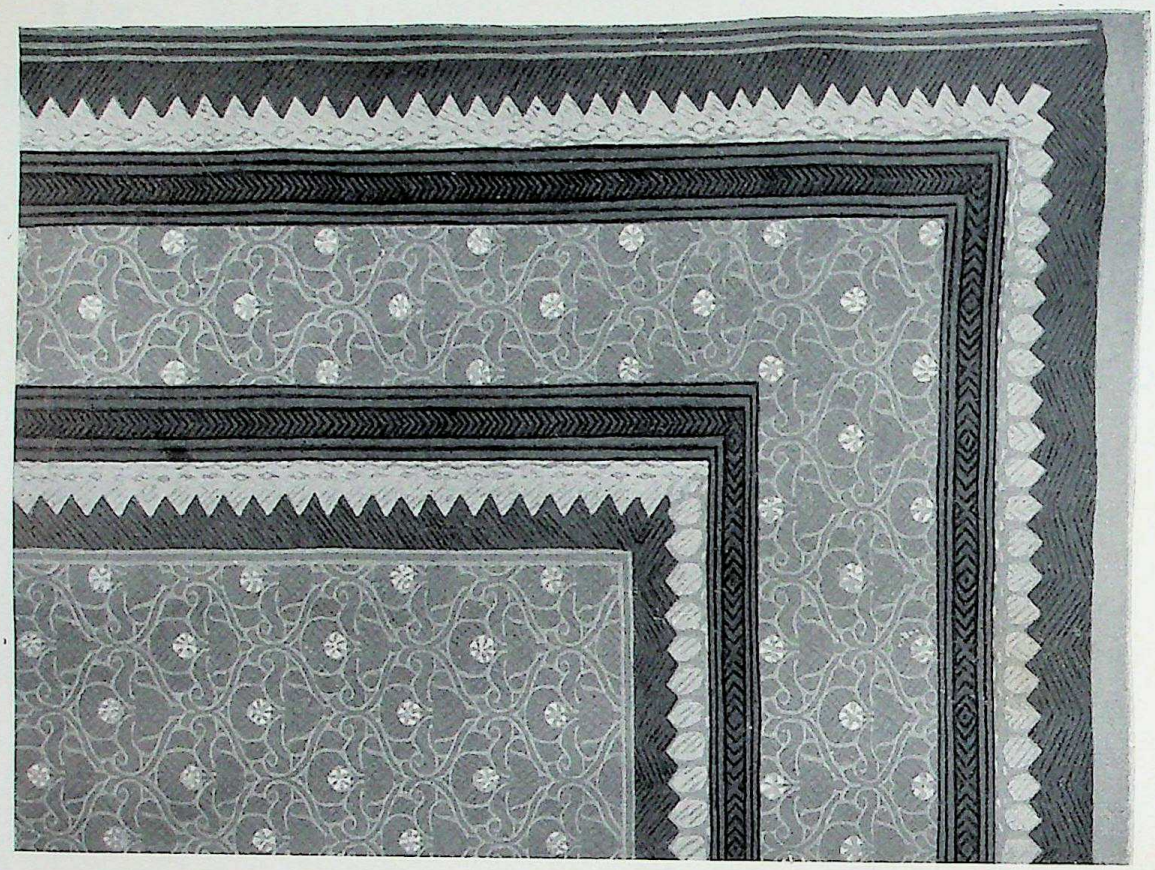
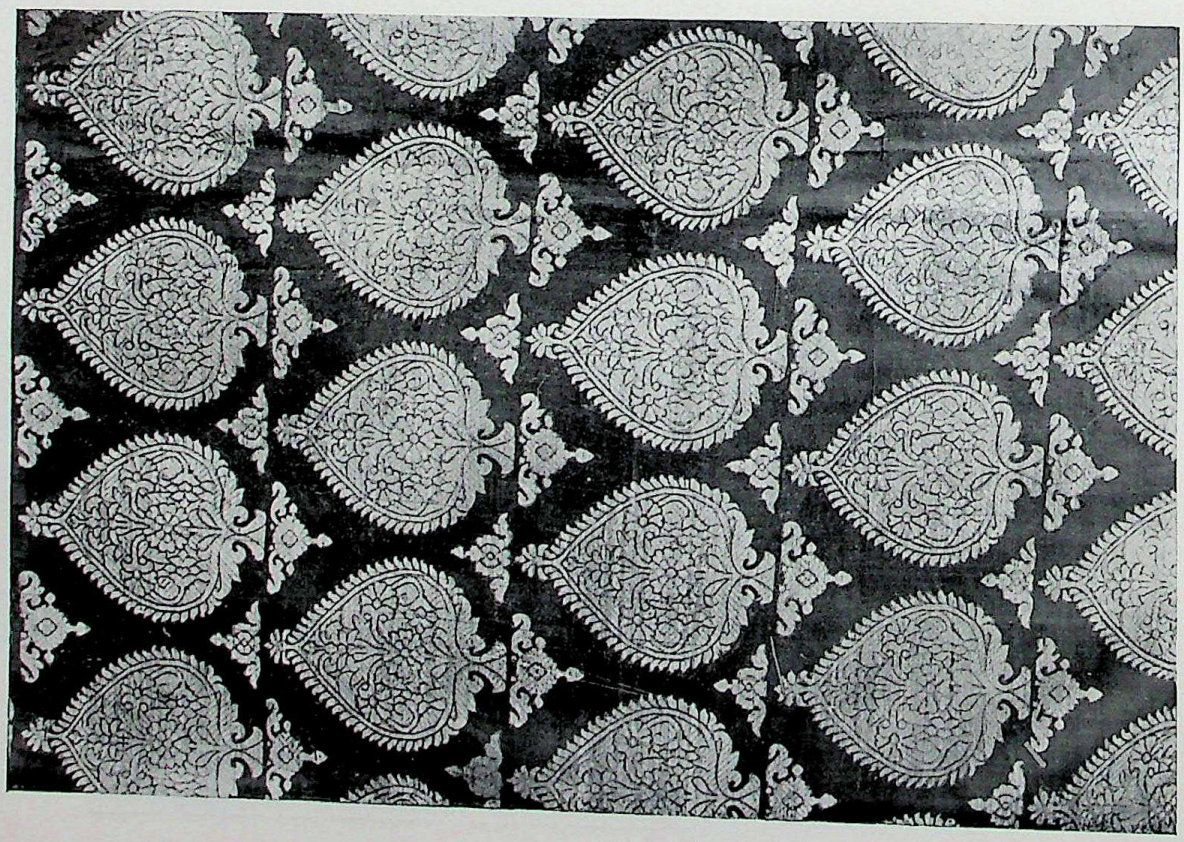


SPECIMEN OF KINKHAB (*GOTA VELA* DESIGN)
(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. I)



BANARASI KINKHAB
18th century
(Courtesy, *Bharat Kala Bhavan*)

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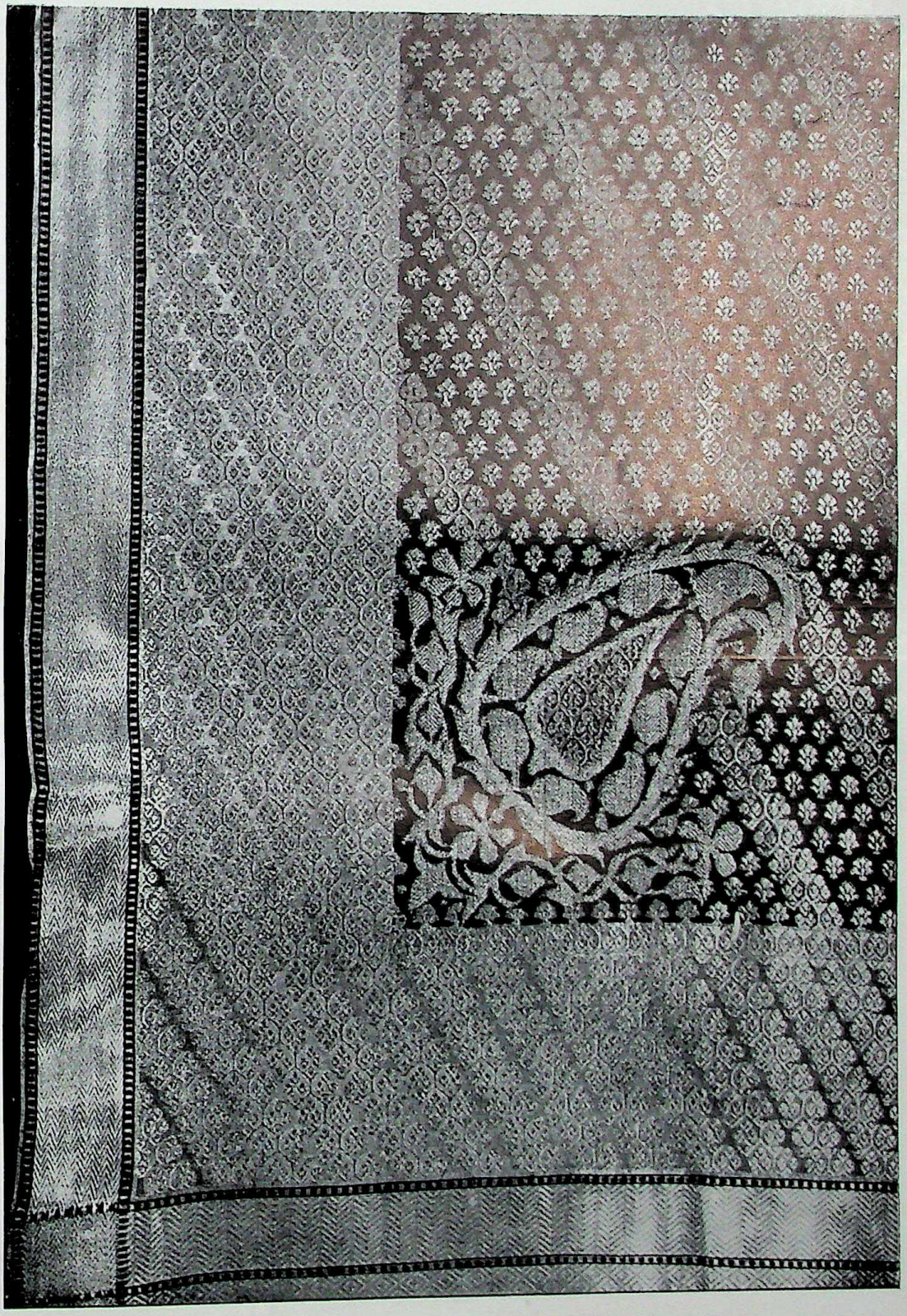
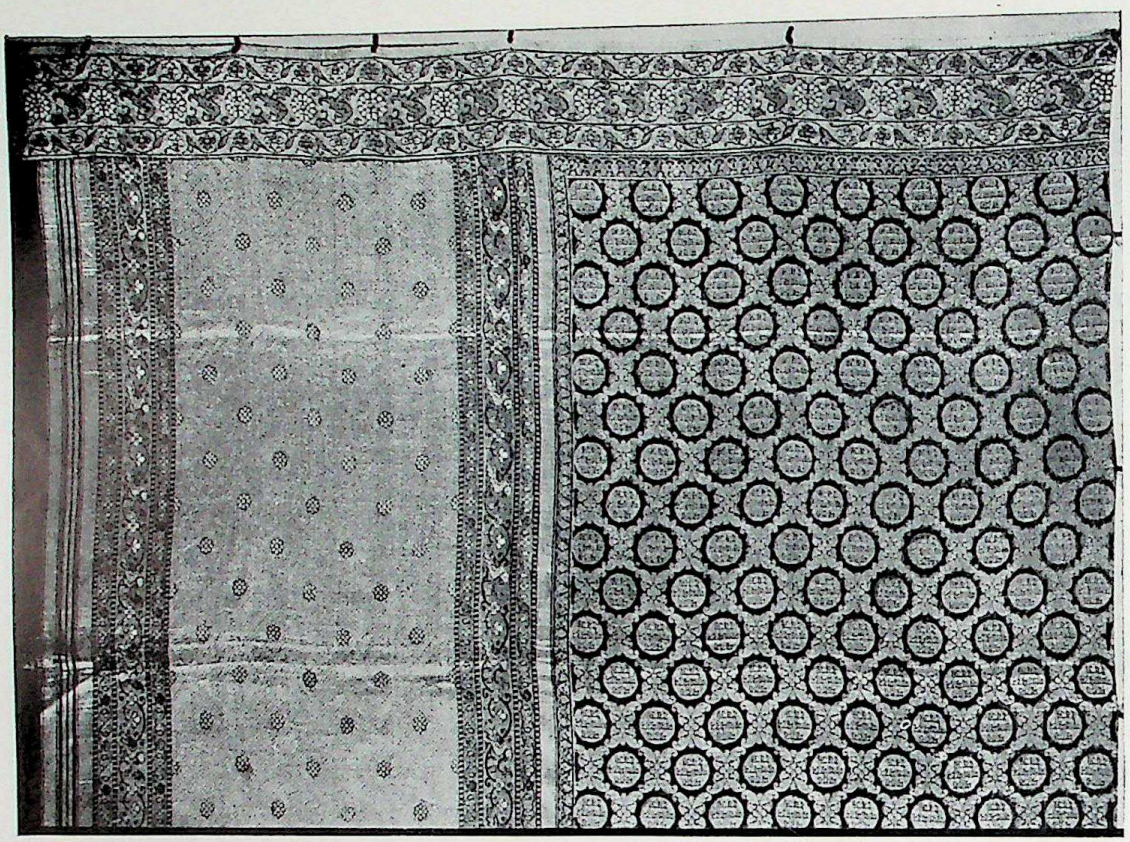


KINKHAB IN GOLD AND SILVER THREAD

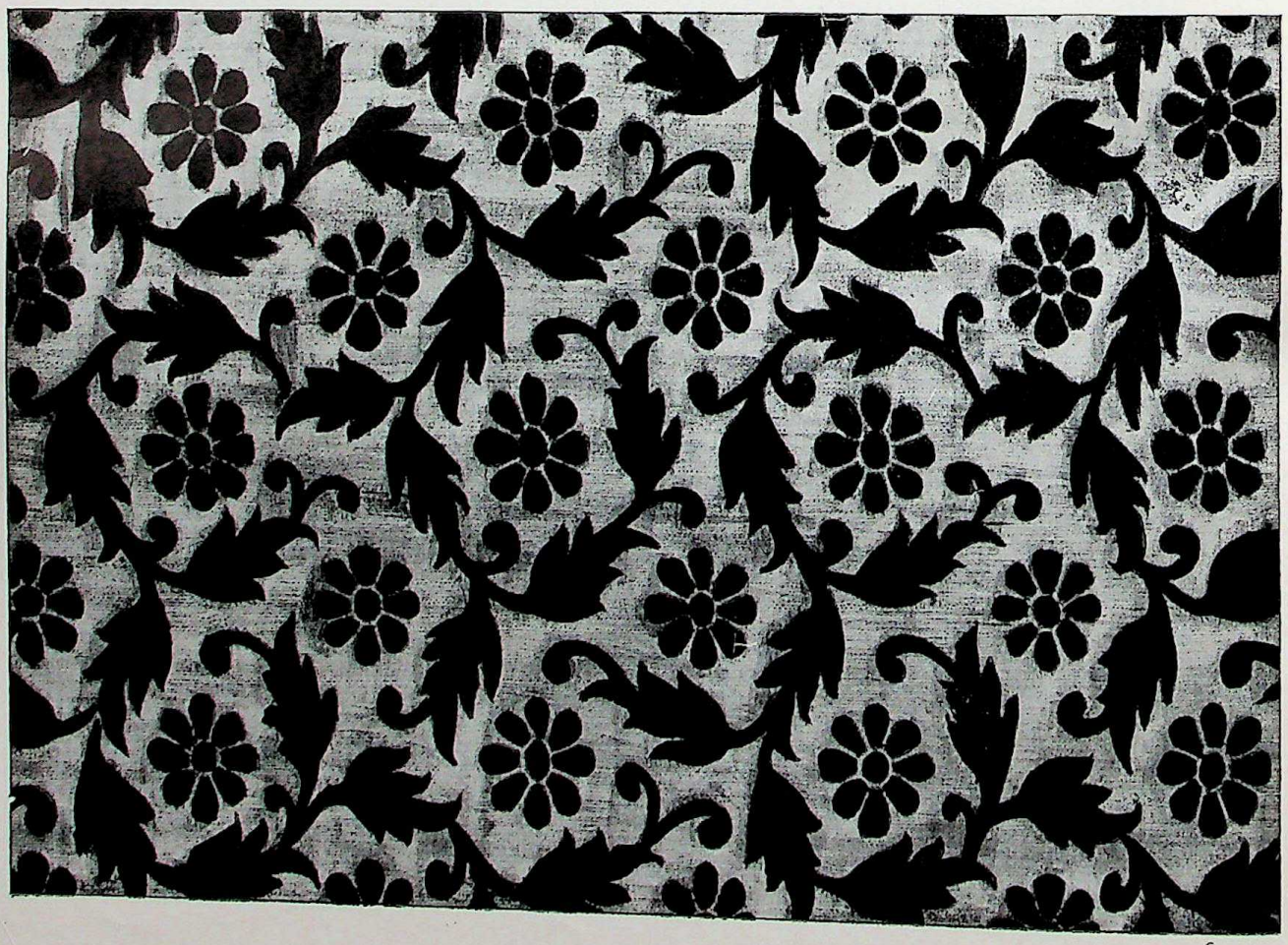
Varanasi, late 18th century

(Courtesy, *State Hermitage*, U.S.S.R.)

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

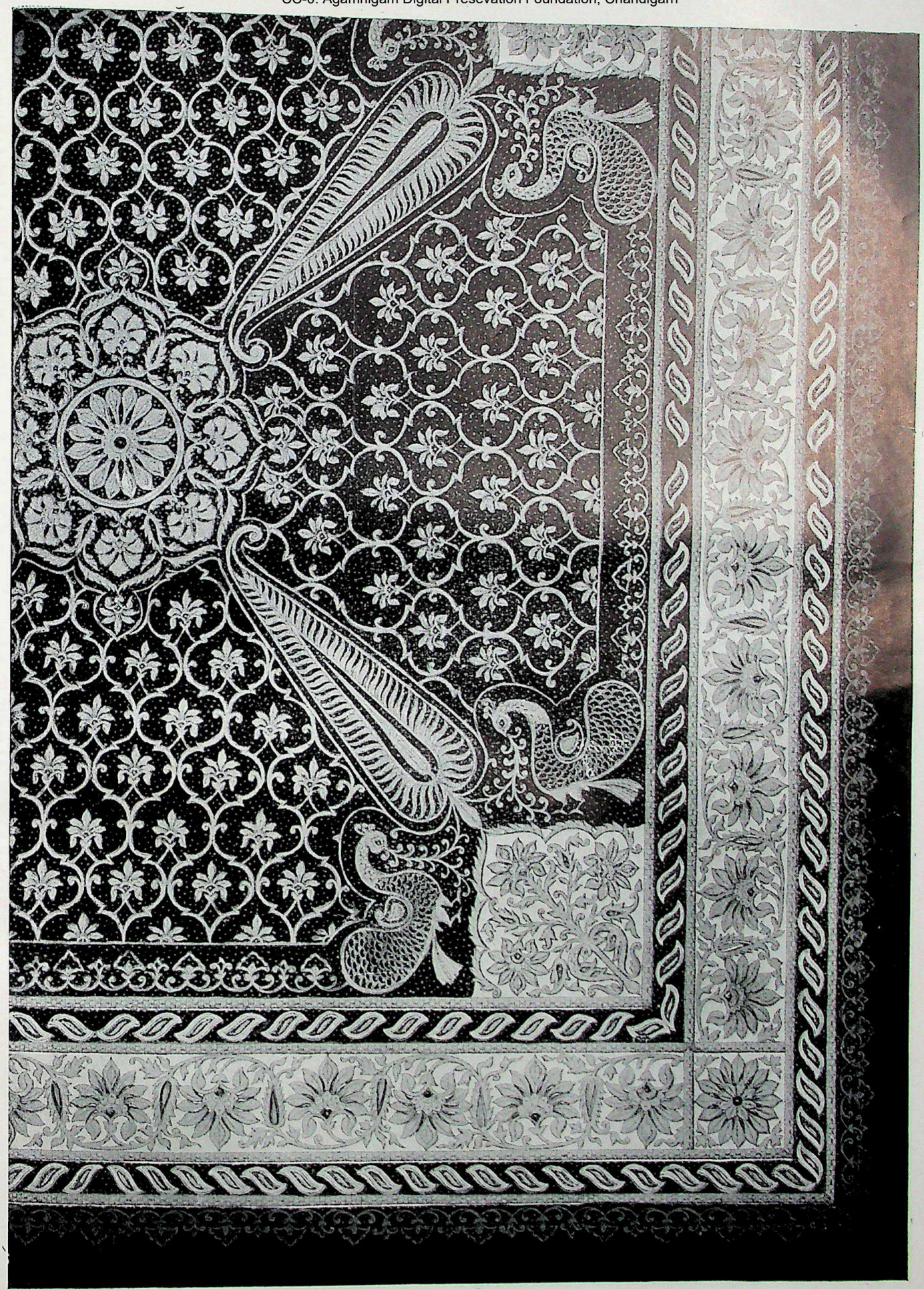


GOLD BROCADE SARI
(Courtesy, *Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery*)



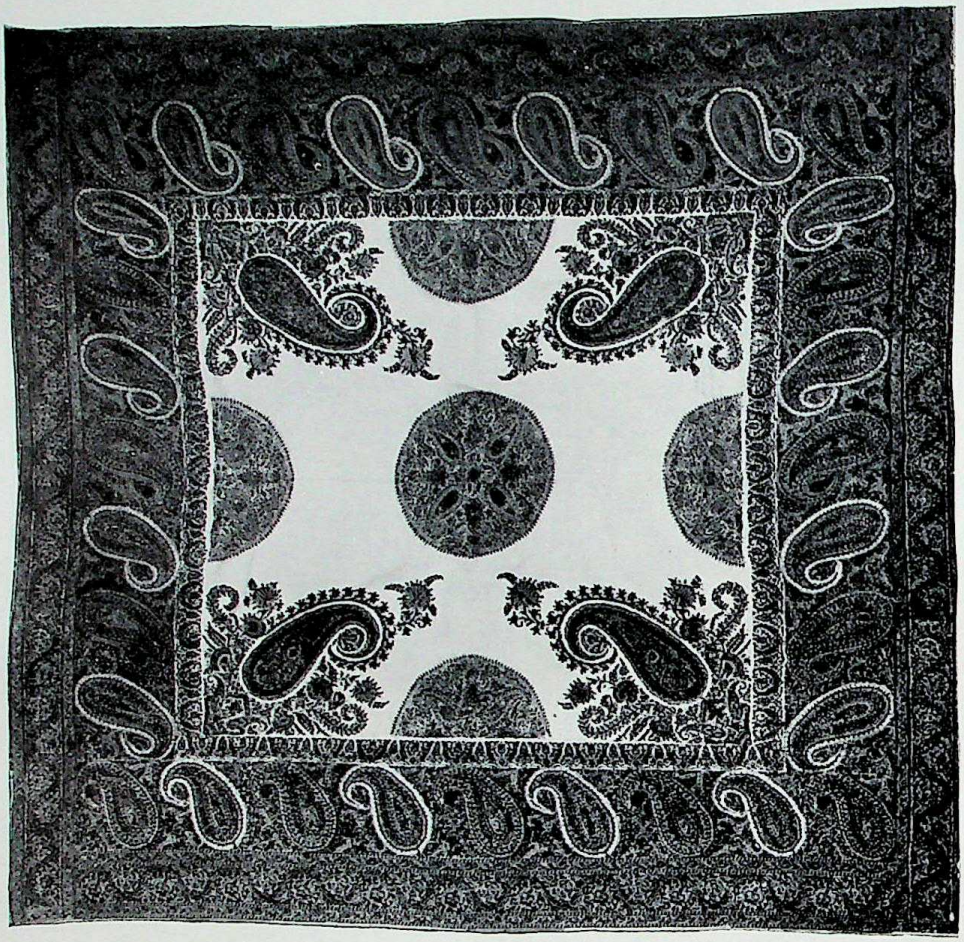
GOLD AND SILVER BROCADE
(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*)

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

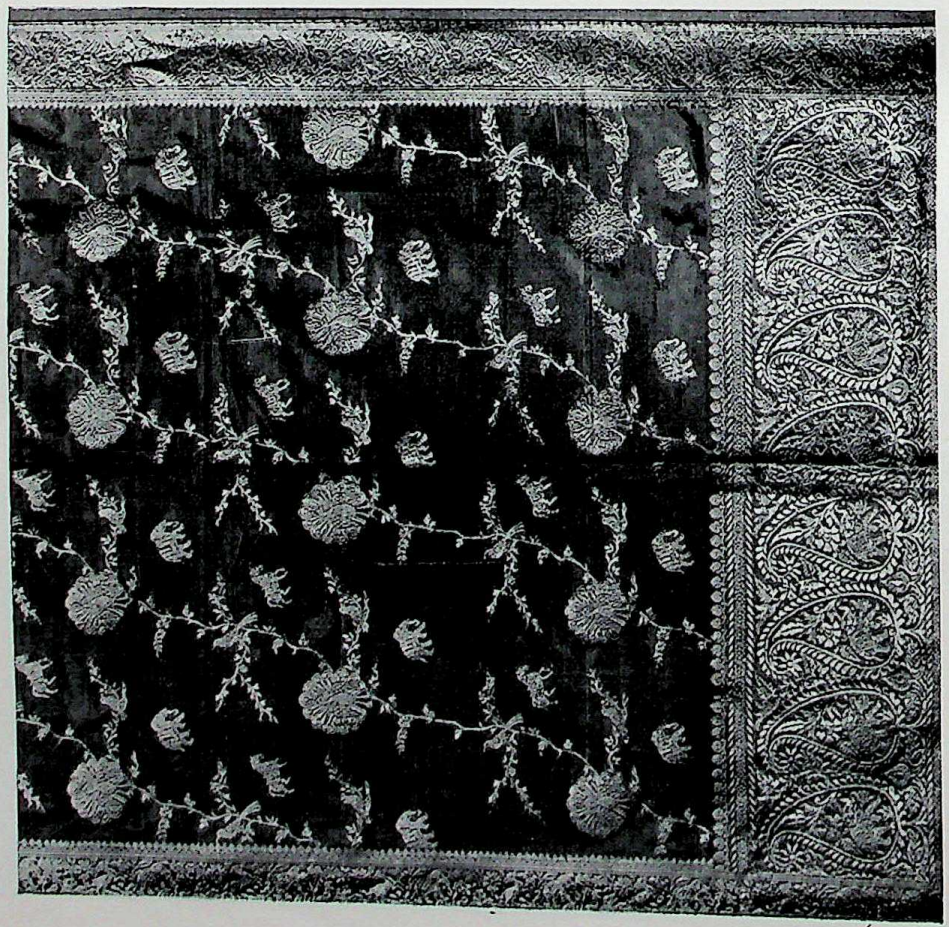


GOLD AND SILVER EMBROIDERED VELVET CARPET FROM TRIPLICANE
A magnificent example that with its richness of effect is neither gaudy nor glaring
(From *Masterpieces of Industrial Art and Sculpture at the International Exhibition* 1862 by J. B. Waring)

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



KASHMIRI SHAWL. A.D. 1794
(Courtesy, *State Historical Museum*, U.S.S.R.)



SILK CLOTH ORNAMENTED WITH GOLD THREAD FROM VARANASI, MODERN.
(Courtesy, *State Museum of Oriental Culture*, U.S.S.R.)

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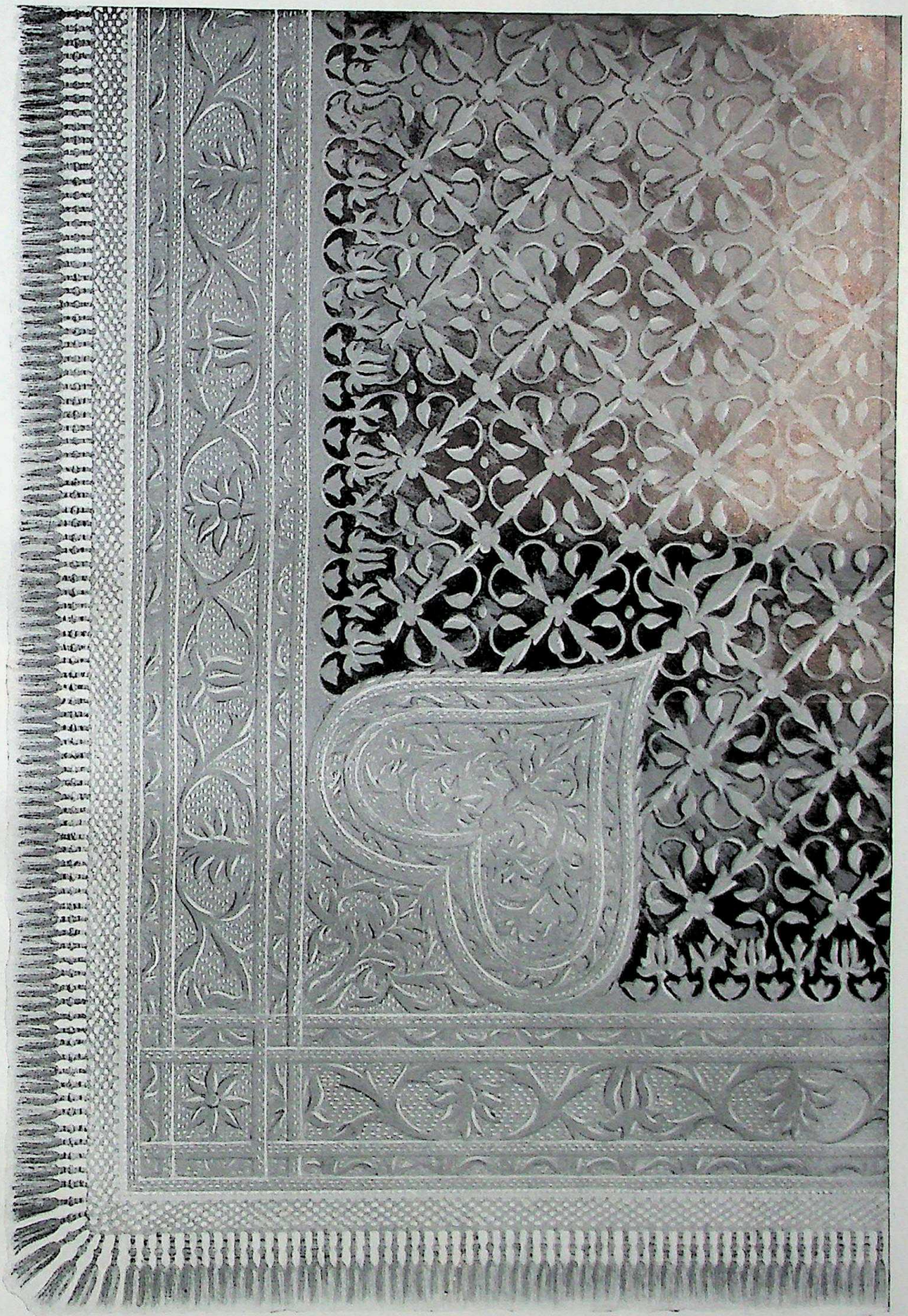
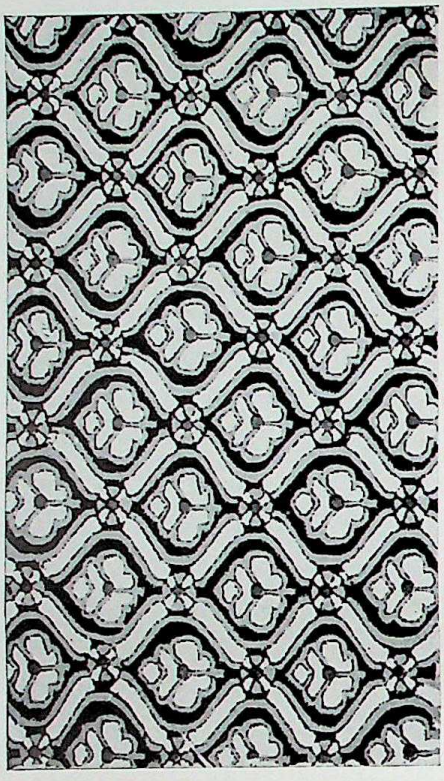


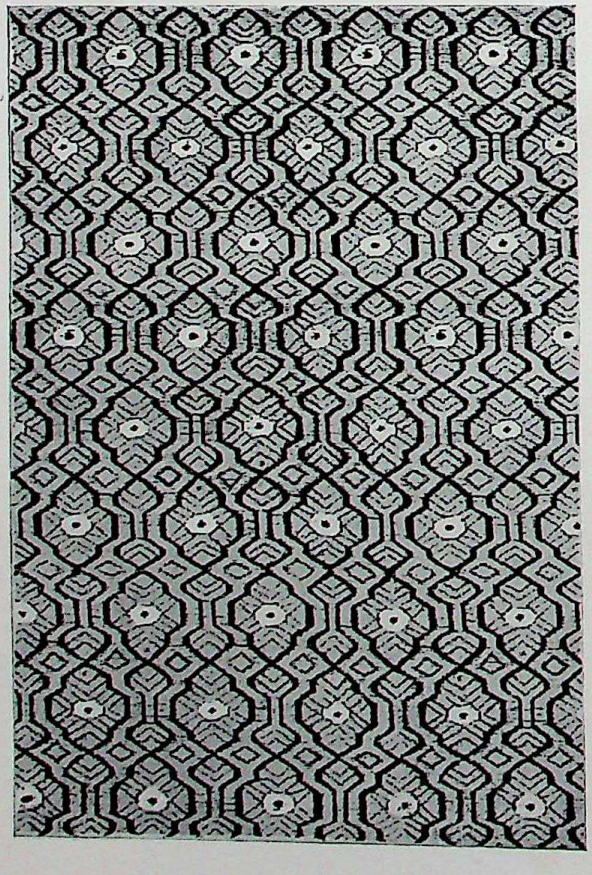
INDIAN ELEPHANT TRAPPING

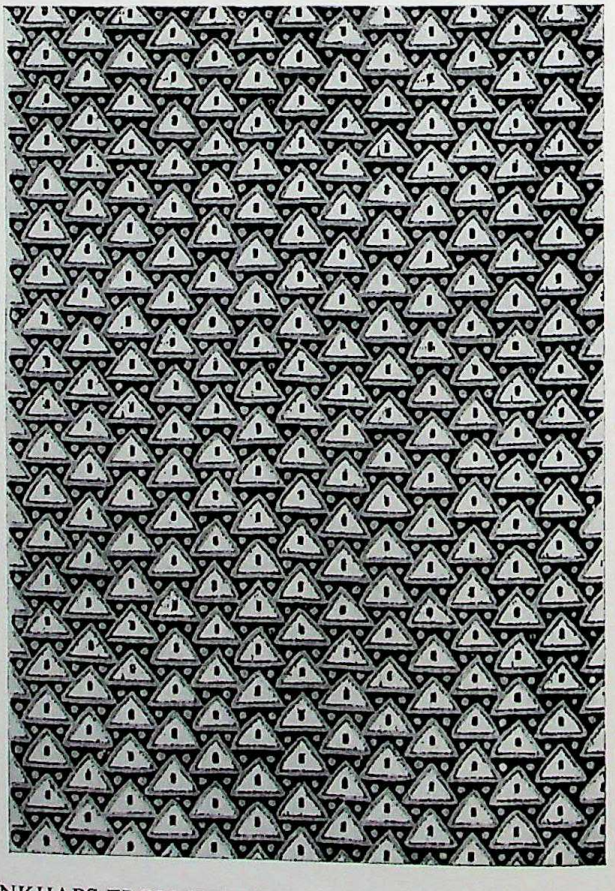
A splendid velvet covering worked with gold and silver, hanging from the lower part of the howdah

(From *Industrial Arts of the XIXth Century at the Great Exhibition*, by M. Digby Wyatt)

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

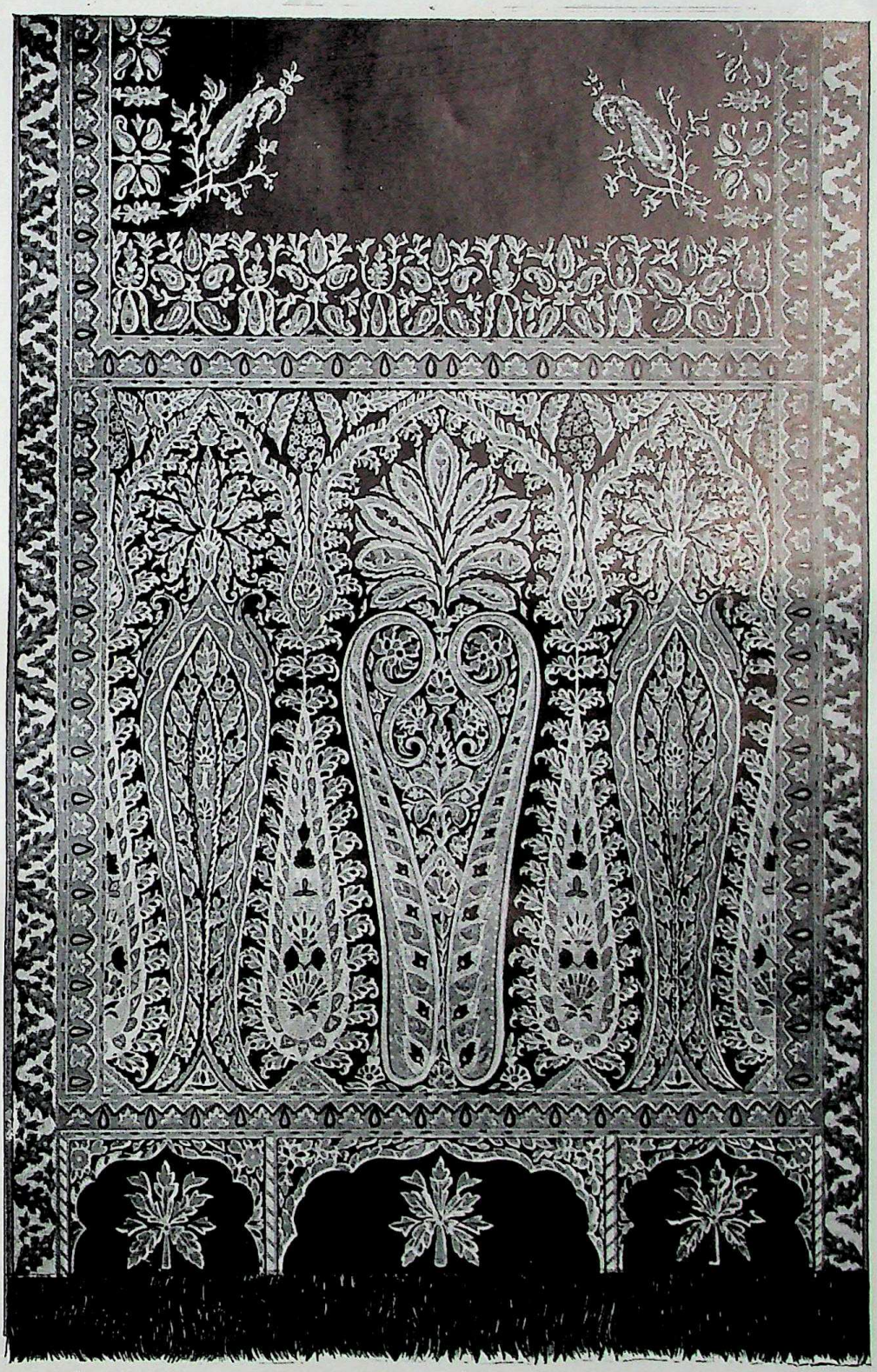






FOUR SPECIMENS OF KINKHABS FROM SURAT
Woven with gold and silver thread on silk
(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*)

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



KASHMIR SCARF-END

A fine specimen exhibiting a harmonious blending of deep-toned colours

(From *Industrial Arts of XIXth Century at the Great Exhibition* by M. Digby Wyatt)

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SHAWL FROM DELHI

(From *Industrial Arts of the XIXth Century at the Great Exhibition* by M. Digby Wyatt)

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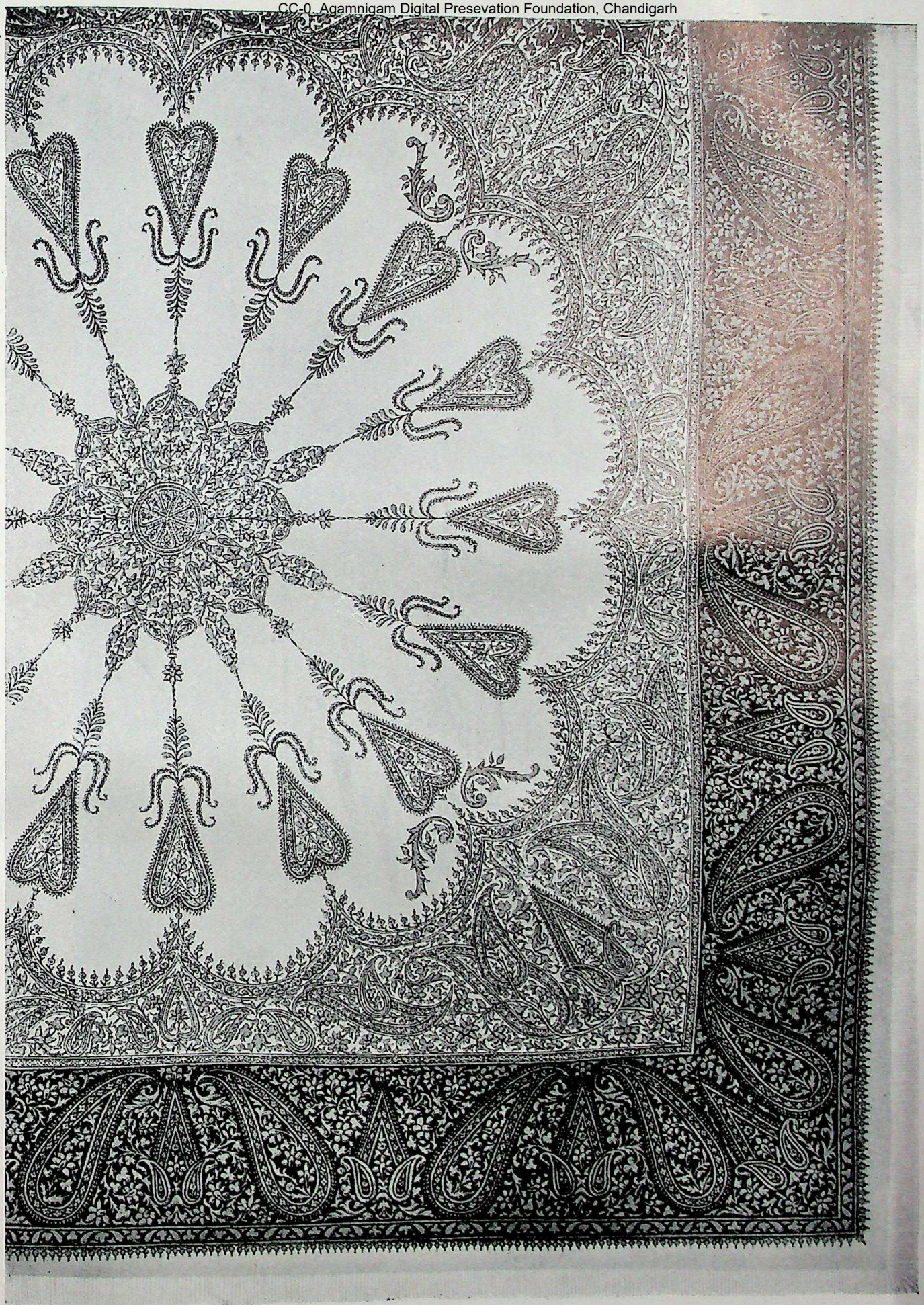

GOLD-EMBROIDERED KASHMIR SHAWL

(From *Masterpieces of Industrial Art and Sculpture at the International Exhibition* 1862 by J. B. Waring)

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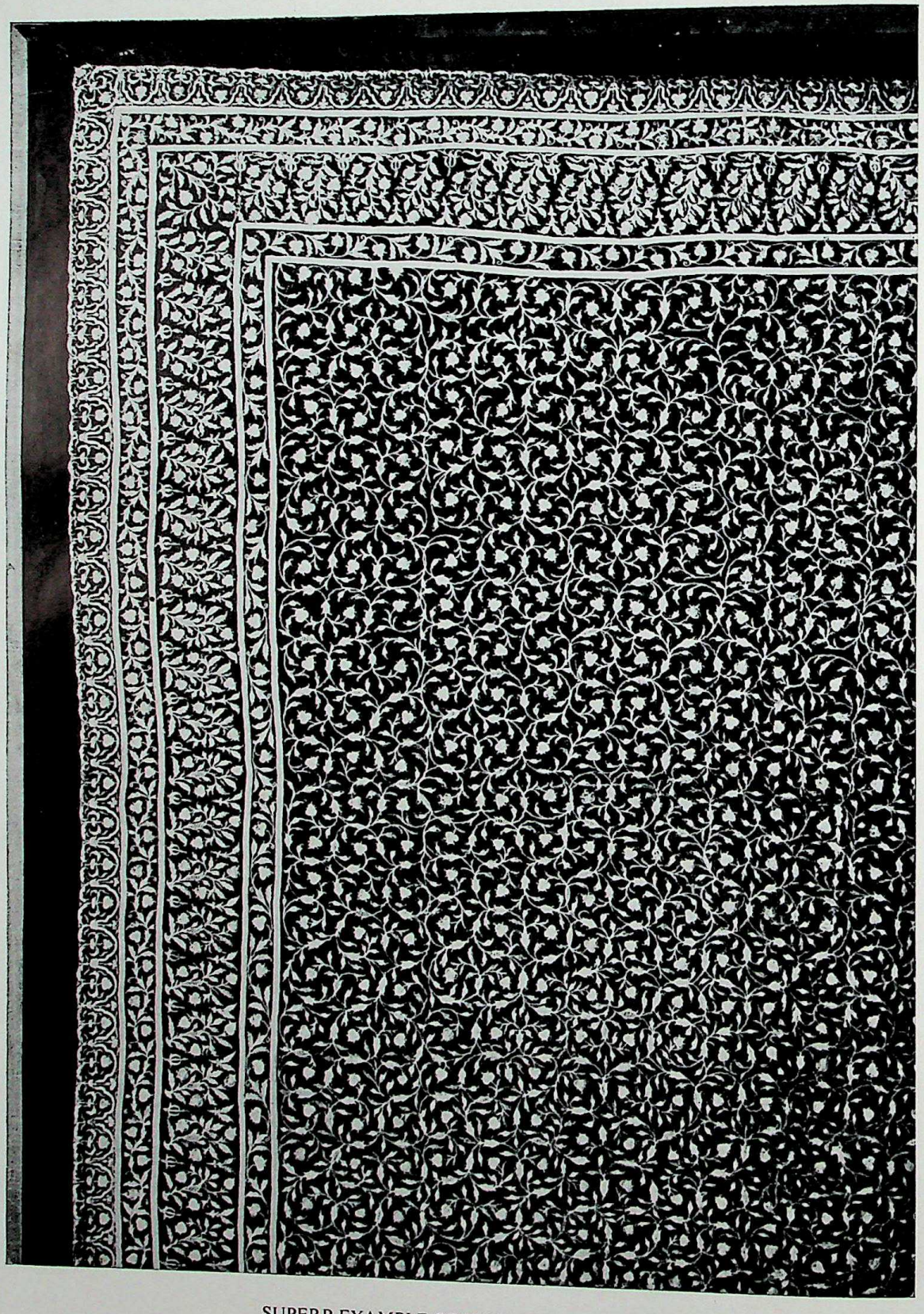


SUPERB EXAMPLE OF WOOLLEN CLOTH

Embroidered with coloured silks and gold and silver thread, 18th century
(Courtesy, *State Hermitage*, U.S.S.R.)

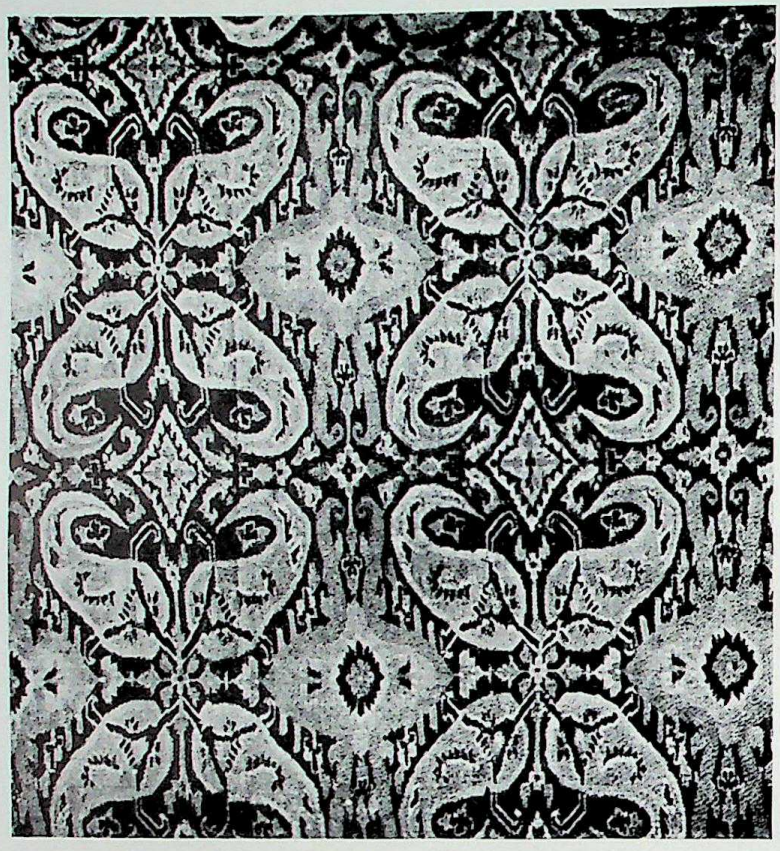
CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

PLATE 35

SUPERB WOOLLEN SHAWL FROM AMRITSAR

(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. II)

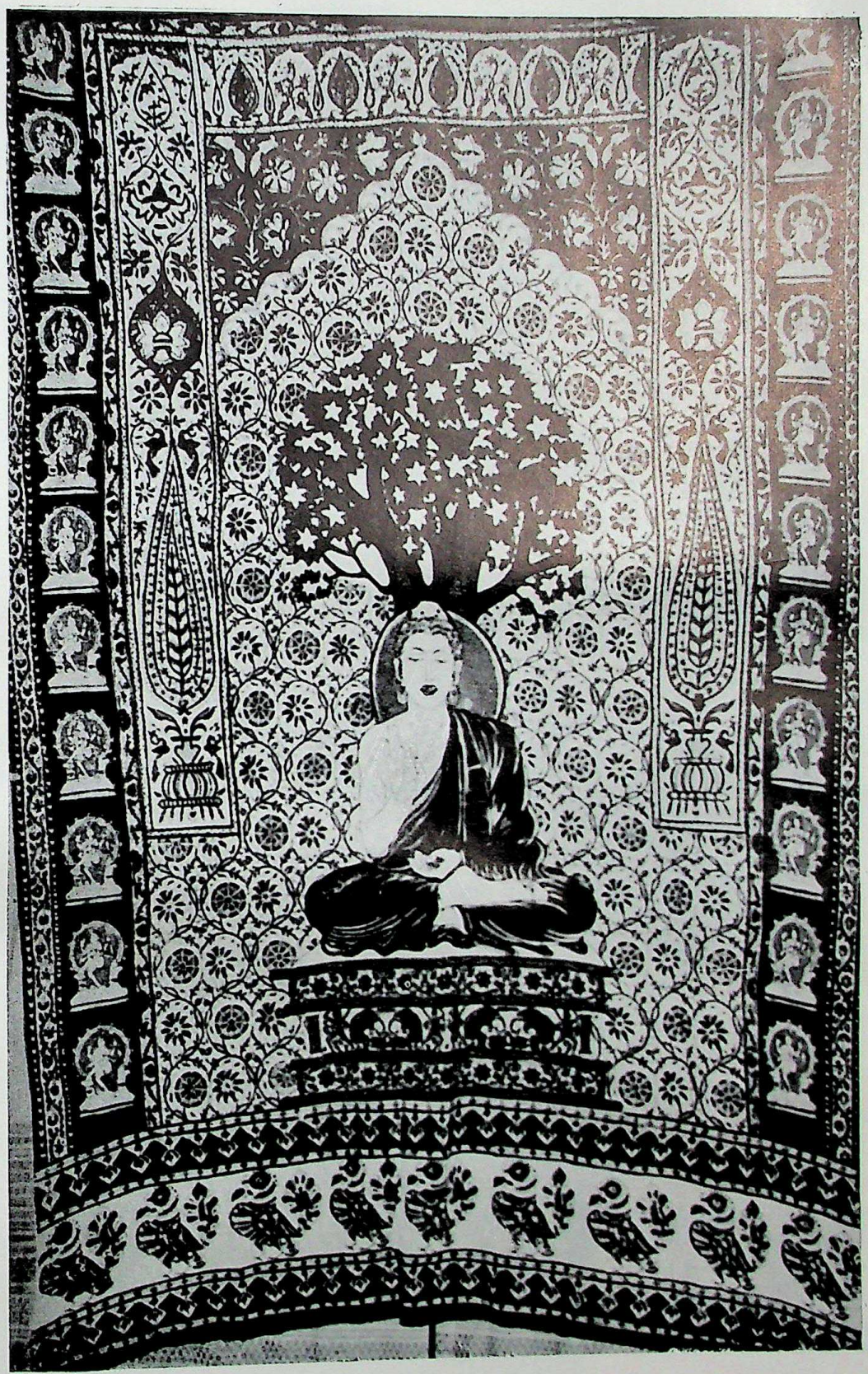
CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



WOVEN SHAWL FROM KASHMIR
Courtesy, *Bharat Kala Bhavan*)

PALAKOLA CURTAIN
(PALAMPORE)
(Courtesy, *Government Museum*, Madras)

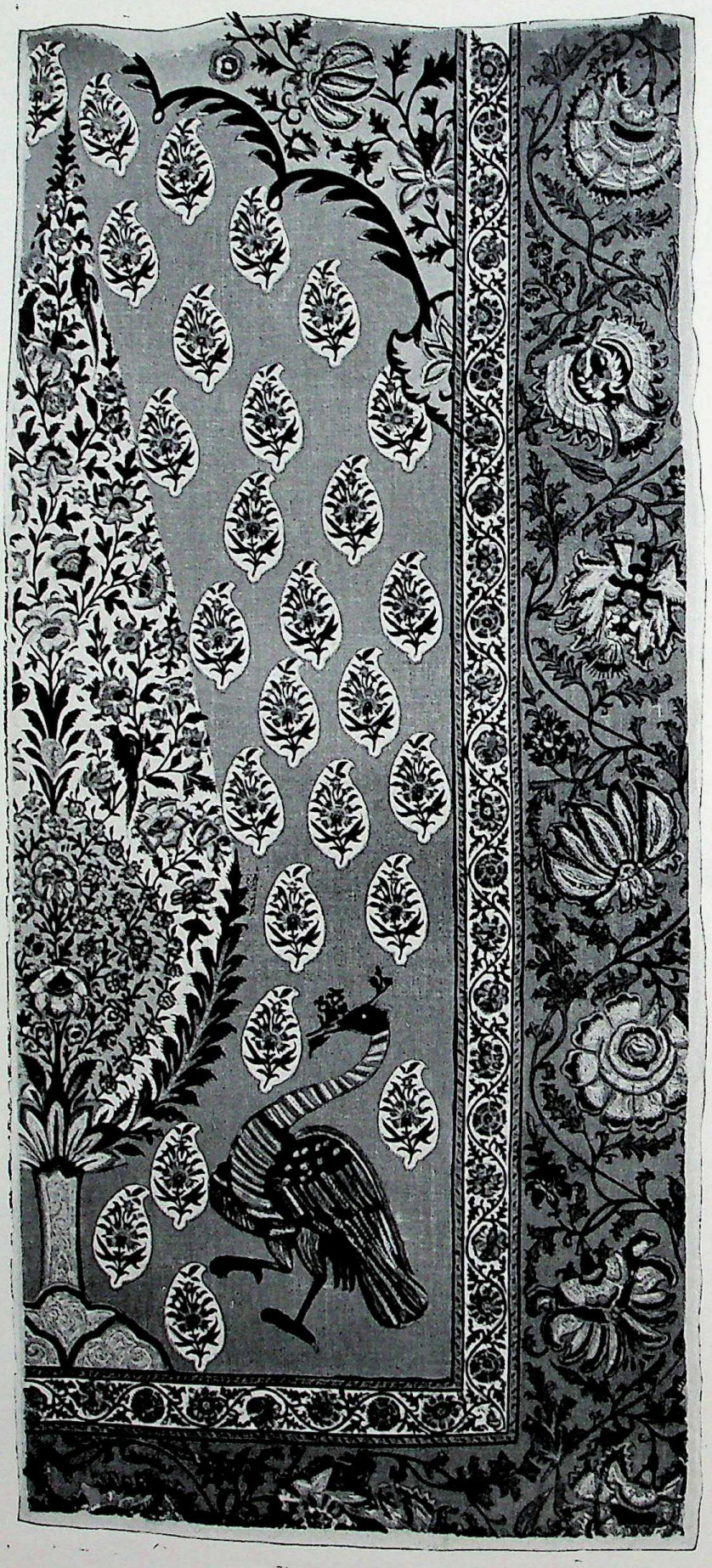
CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



A SUPERB EXAMPLE OF A MASULIPATAM KALAMKARI PRINT

(*Photo*: R. V. Rao)

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



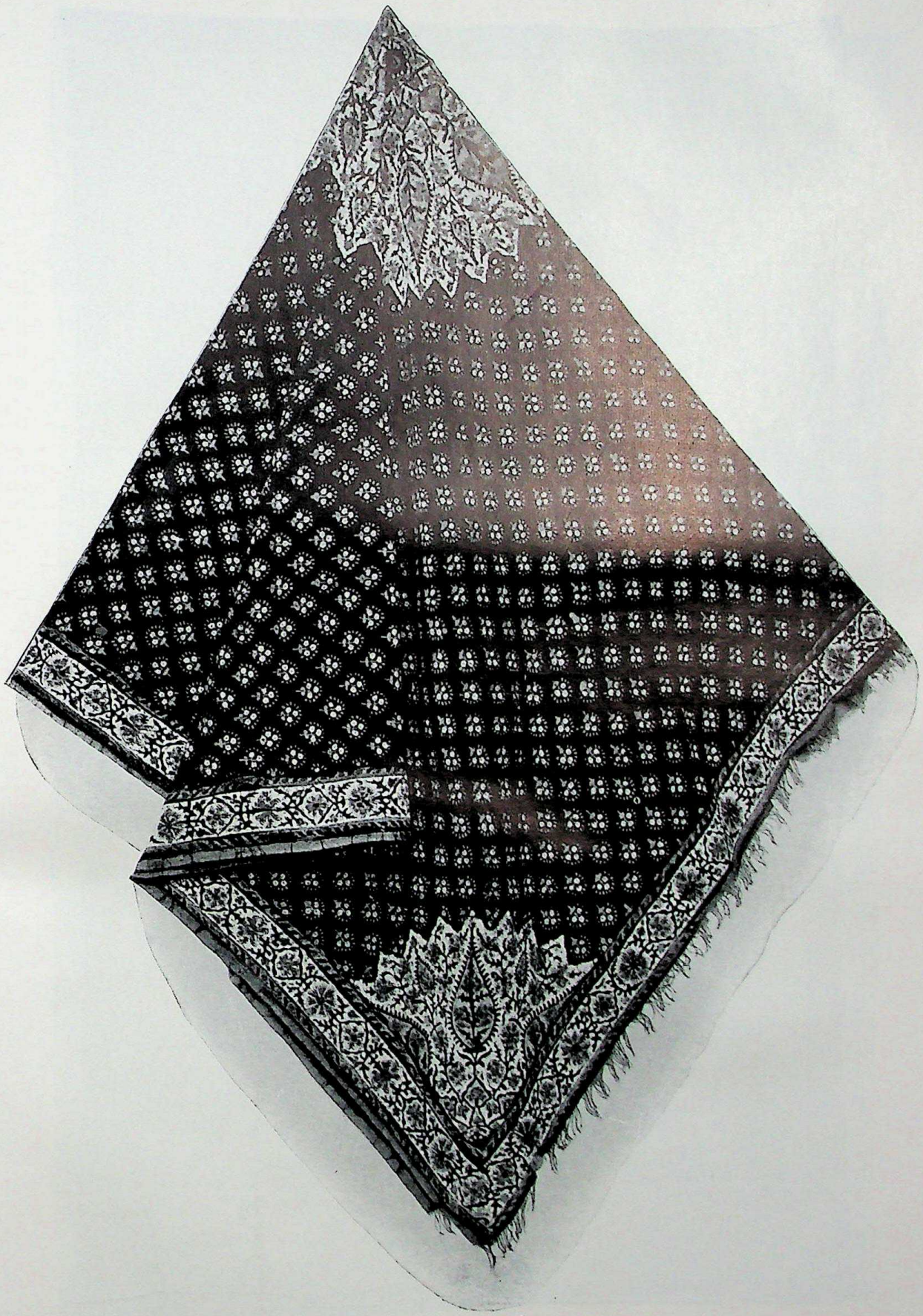
PART OF A HAND PAINTED
COTTON PRAYER RUG

"Tree on Mound" and birds design

17th or 18th century

(From G. P. Baker's *Calico Painting and Printing in the East Indies*, by courtesy of G. P. & J. Baker Ltd., London)

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



BLOCK PRINTED COTTON SHAWL
Floral diaper design, 18th century
(From G. P. Baker's *Calico Painting and Printing in the East Indies*, by courtesy of G. P. & J. Baker Ltd., London)

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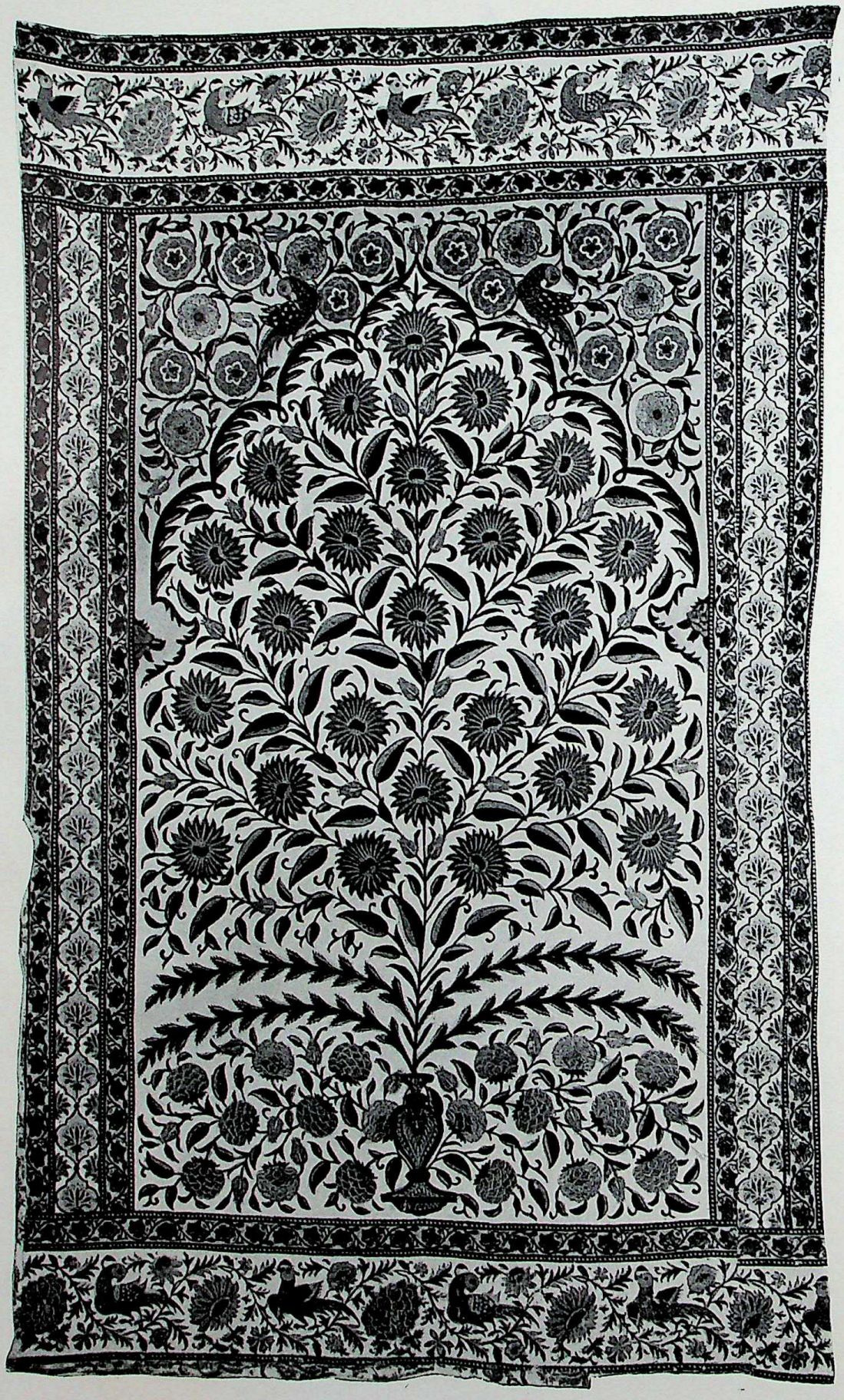
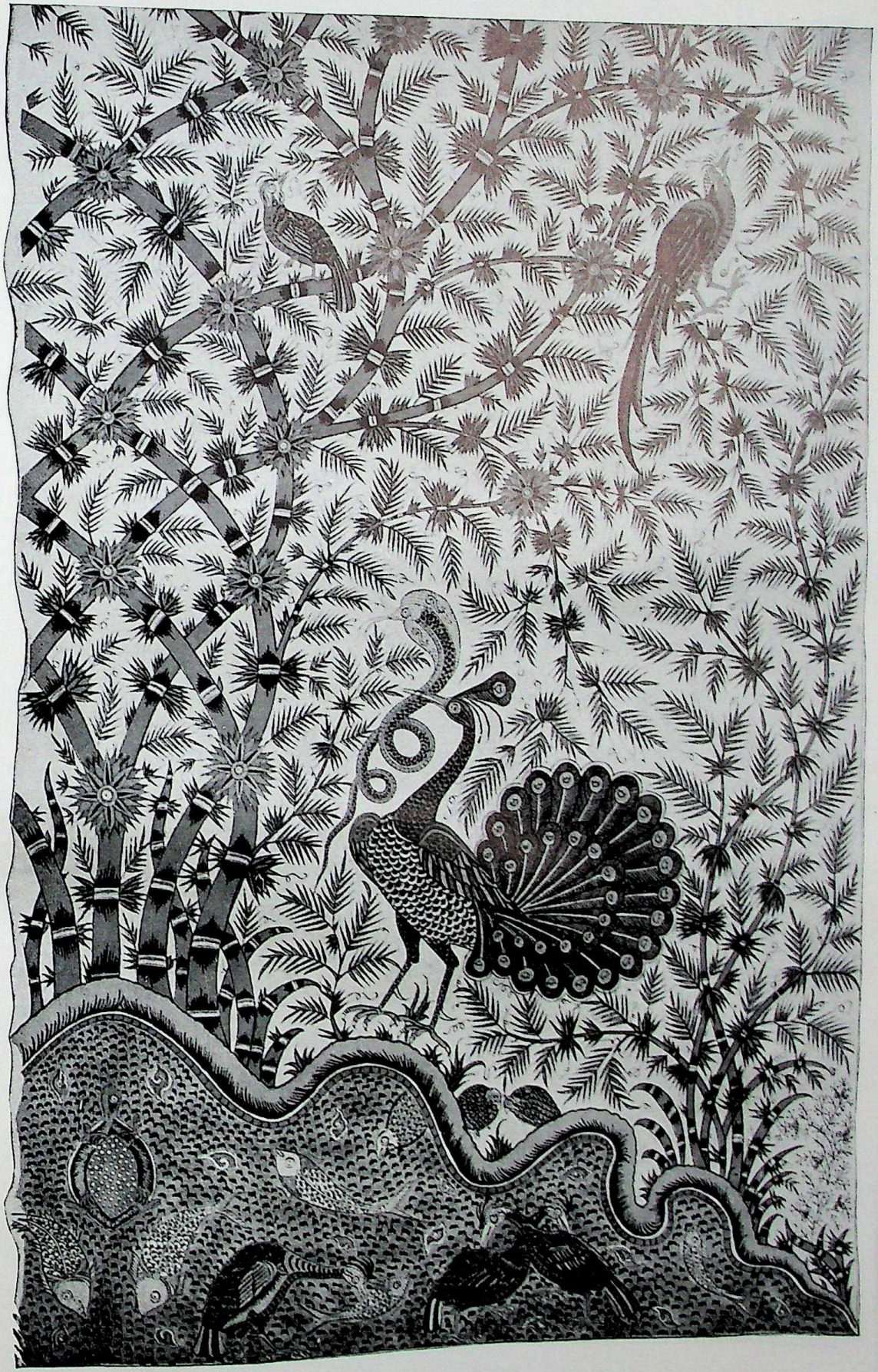


HAND PAINTED COTTON PRAYER RUG
18th century
(From G. P. Baker's *Calico Painting and Printing in the East Indies*, by Courtesy of G. P. & J. Baker Ltd., London)

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



HAND PAINTED COTTON WALL HANGING
18th century

(From G. P. Baker's *Calico Painting and Printing in the East Indies*,
by Courtesy of G. P. & J. Baker Ltd., London)

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HAND PAINTED COTTON PRAYER RUG
18th century
(From G. P. Baker's *Calico Painting and Printing in the East Indies*,
by Courtesy of G. P. & J. Baker Ltd., London)

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SKIRT MADE IN EUROPE OF INDIAN HAND PAINTED COTTON
Floral design. 17th or 18th century

(From G. P. Baker's *Calico Painting and Printing in the East Indies*, by Courtesy of G. P. & J. Baker Ltd., London)

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DRESSES MADE IN EUROPE OF INDIAN HAND PAINTED COTTON

17th or 18th century

(From G. P. Baker's *Calico Painting and Printing in the East Indies*, by Courtesy of G. P. & J. Baker Ltd., London)

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HAND PRINTED FLOOR COVERING WITH FLORAL MOTIFS, FROM AGRA
19th century
(Courtesy, *Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery*)

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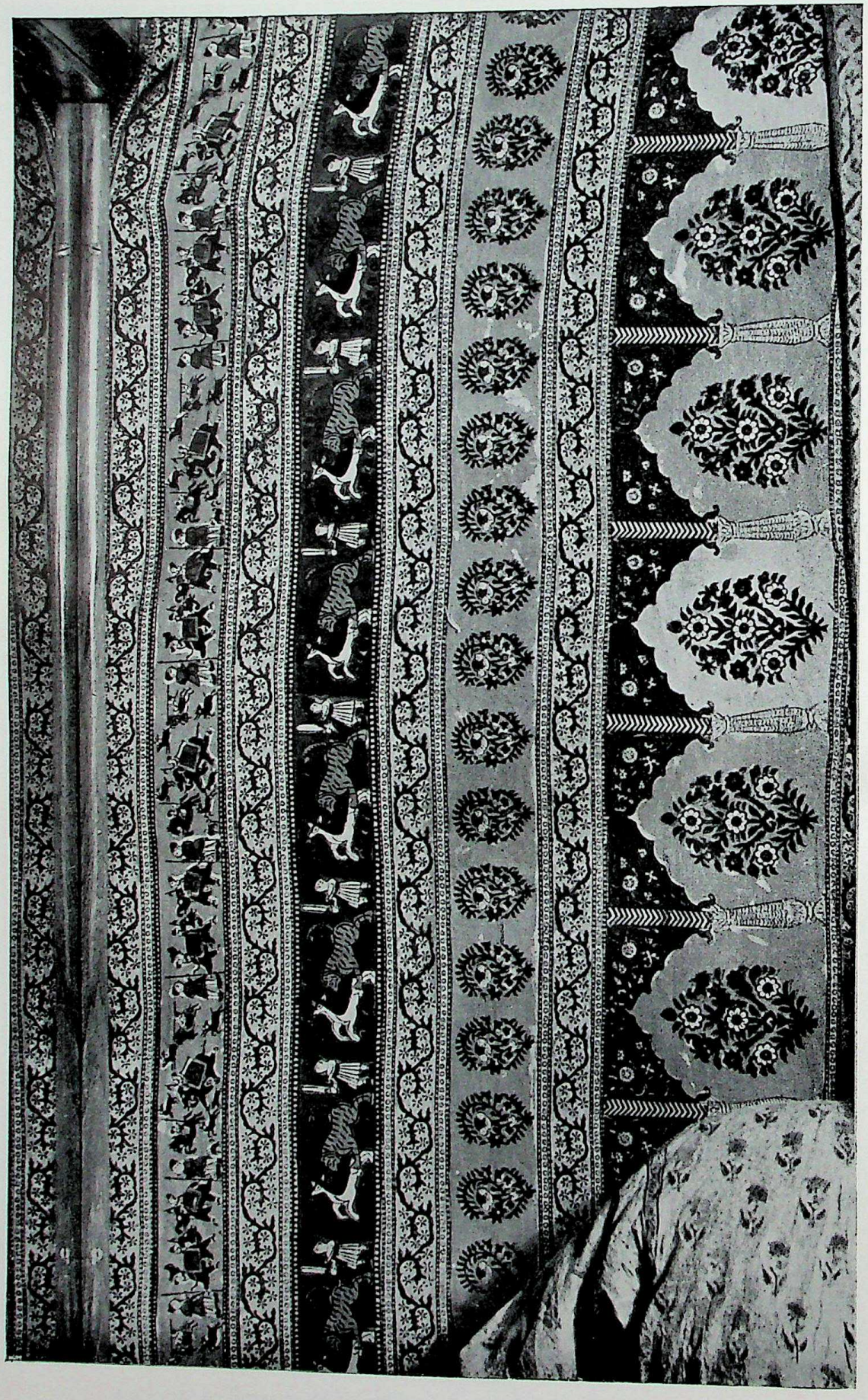

COTTON HAND PRINTED FLOOR COVERING WITH HUNTING SCENES, FROM JAIPUR

19th century

(Courtesy, *Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery*)

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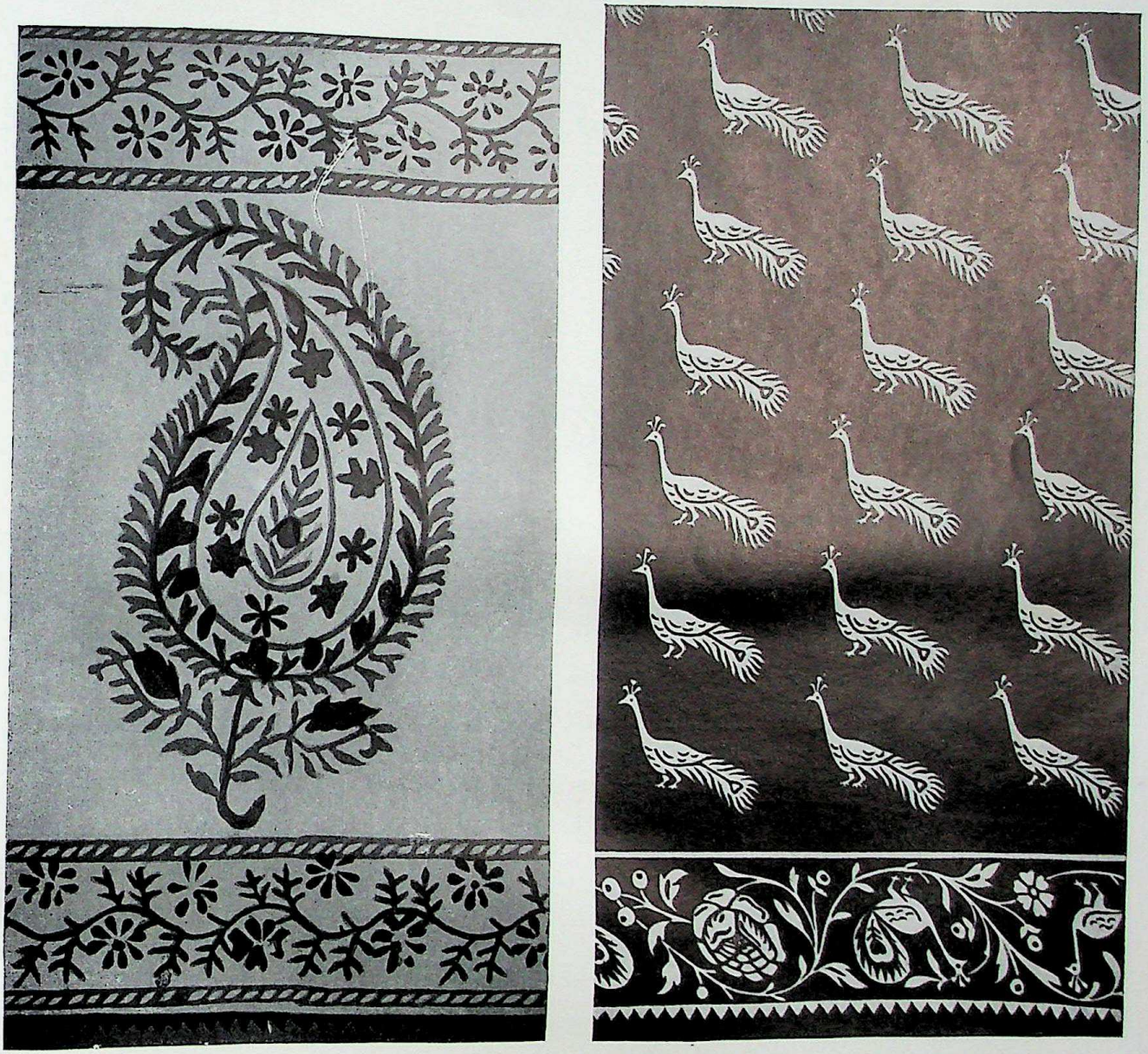
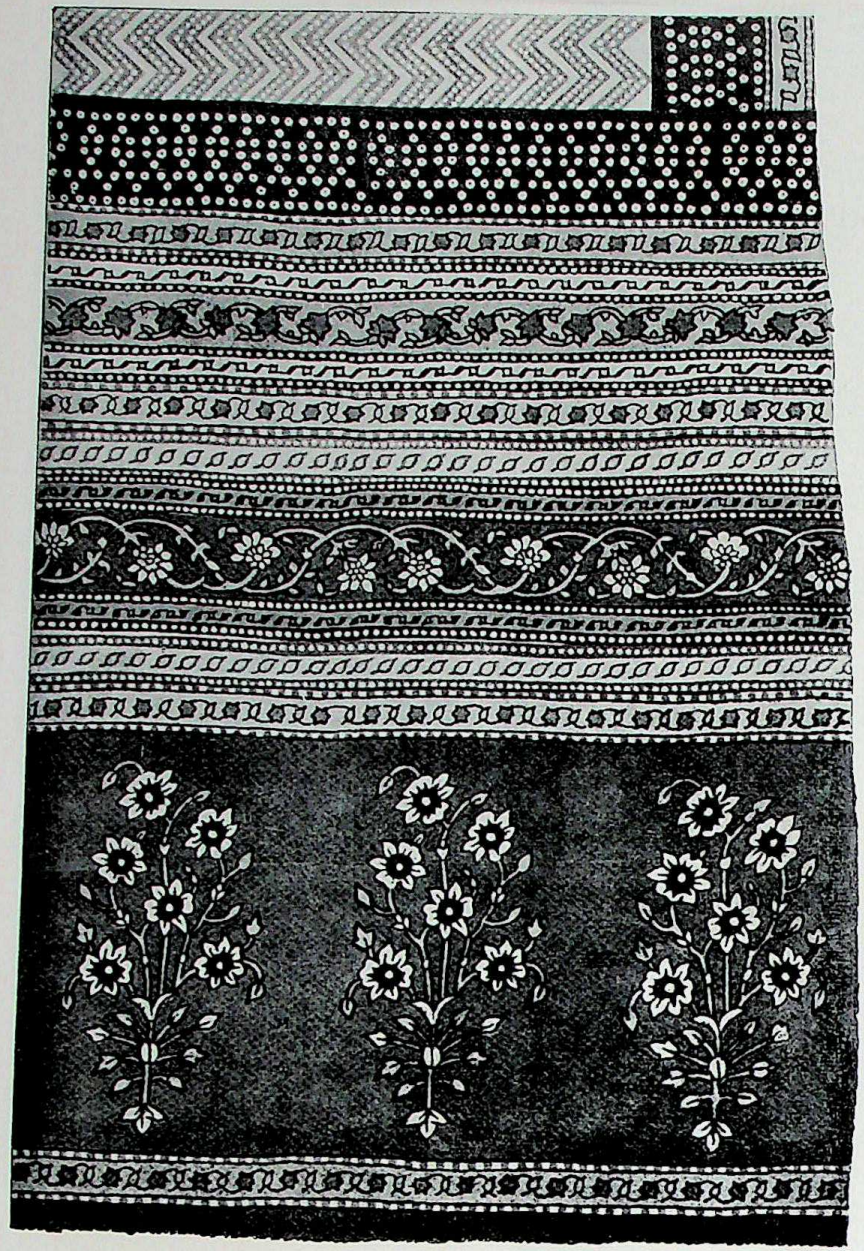
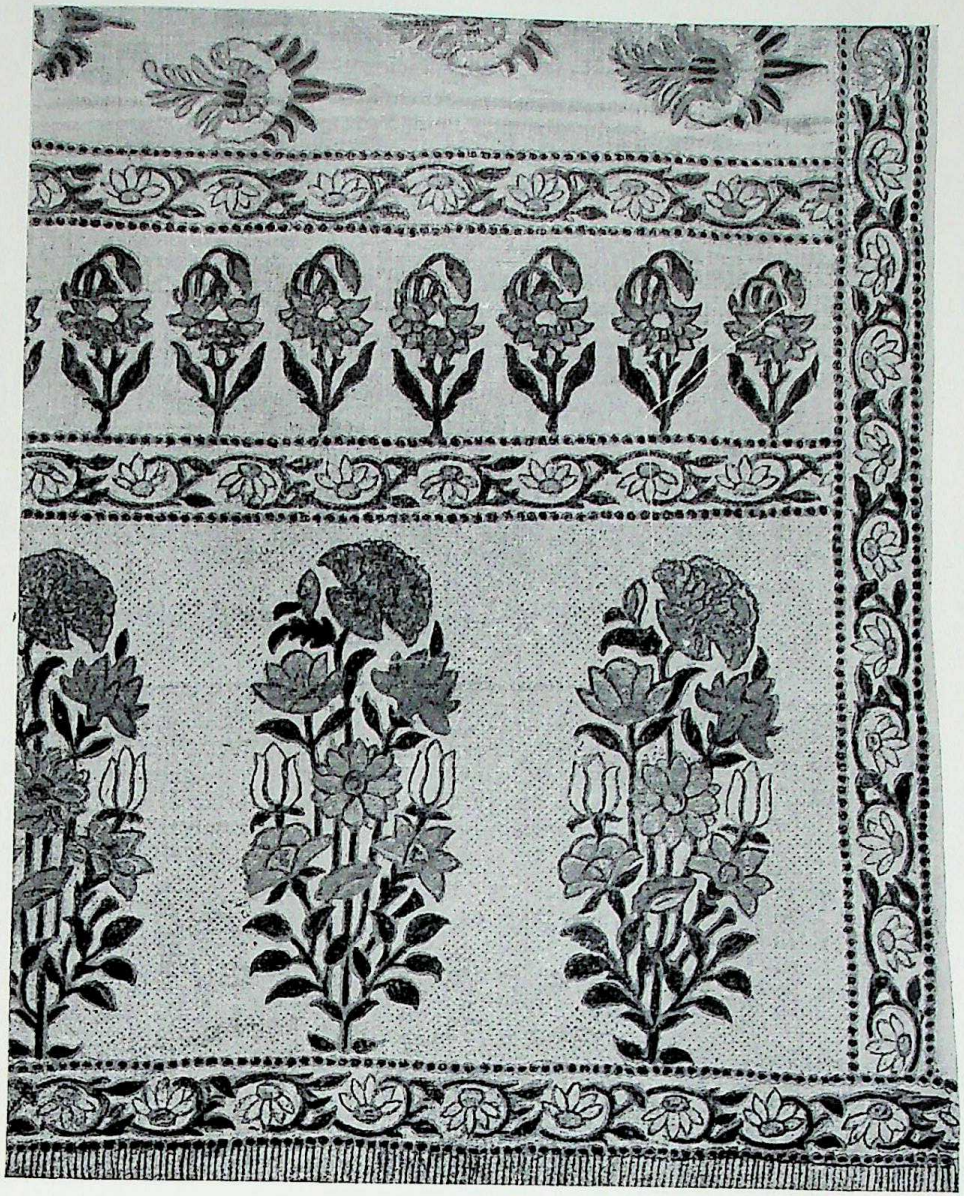


EXAMPLES OF CLOTH HAND PRINTED IN COLOUR

(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. VII)



BORDER OF A HAND PRINTED SARI



PART OF A HAND PRINTED SARI FROM AMRITSAR

(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. I)

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

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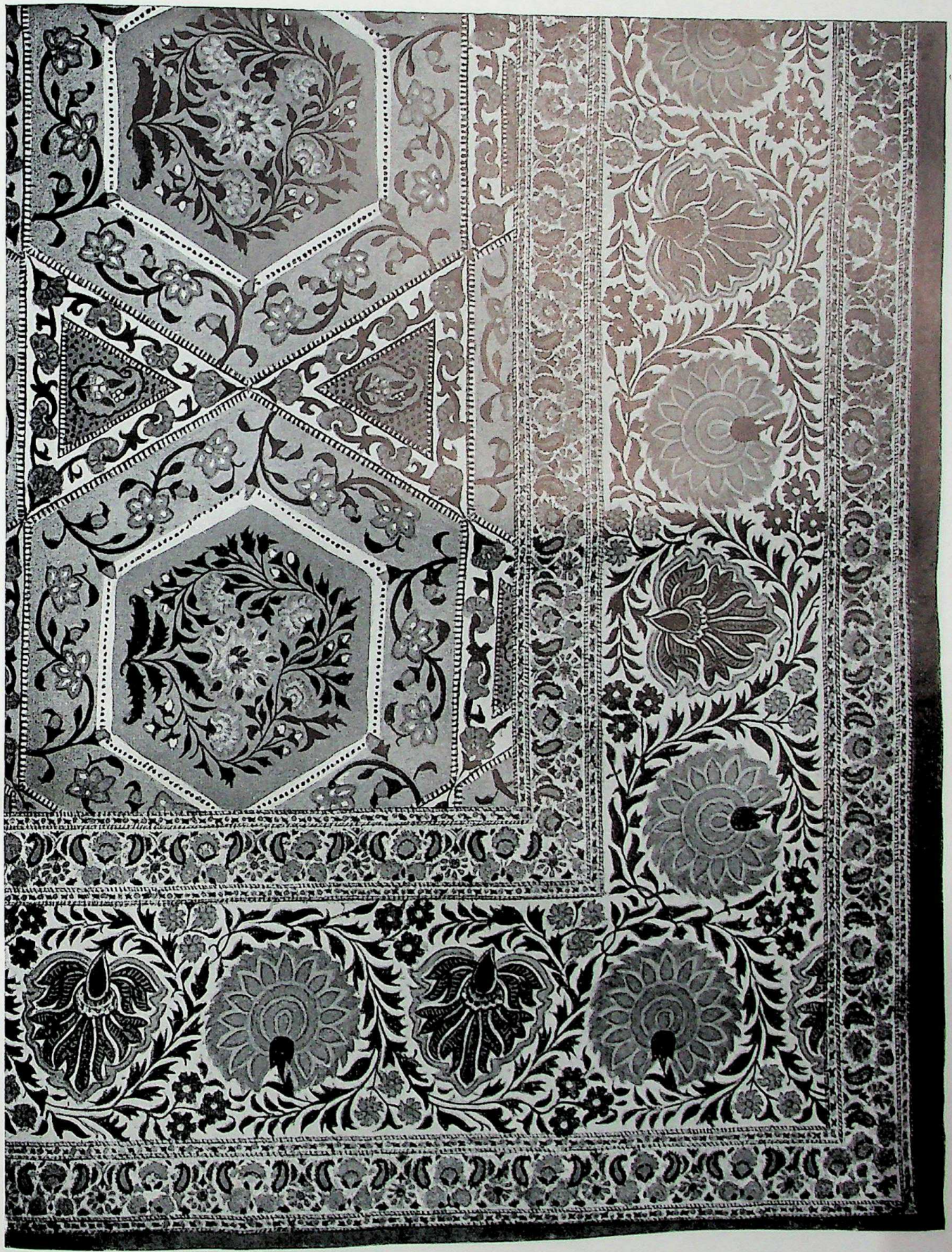

EXAMPLE OF BEAUTIFUL HAND PRINTED COTTON FROM MADRAS
(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. III)

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

SECTION OF A COTTON PRAYER RUG

Partly hand painted and partly block printed. Tree design among floral diaper. 18th century

(From G. P. Baker's *Calico Painting and Printing in the East Indies*, by Courtesy of G. P. & J. Baker Ltd., London)

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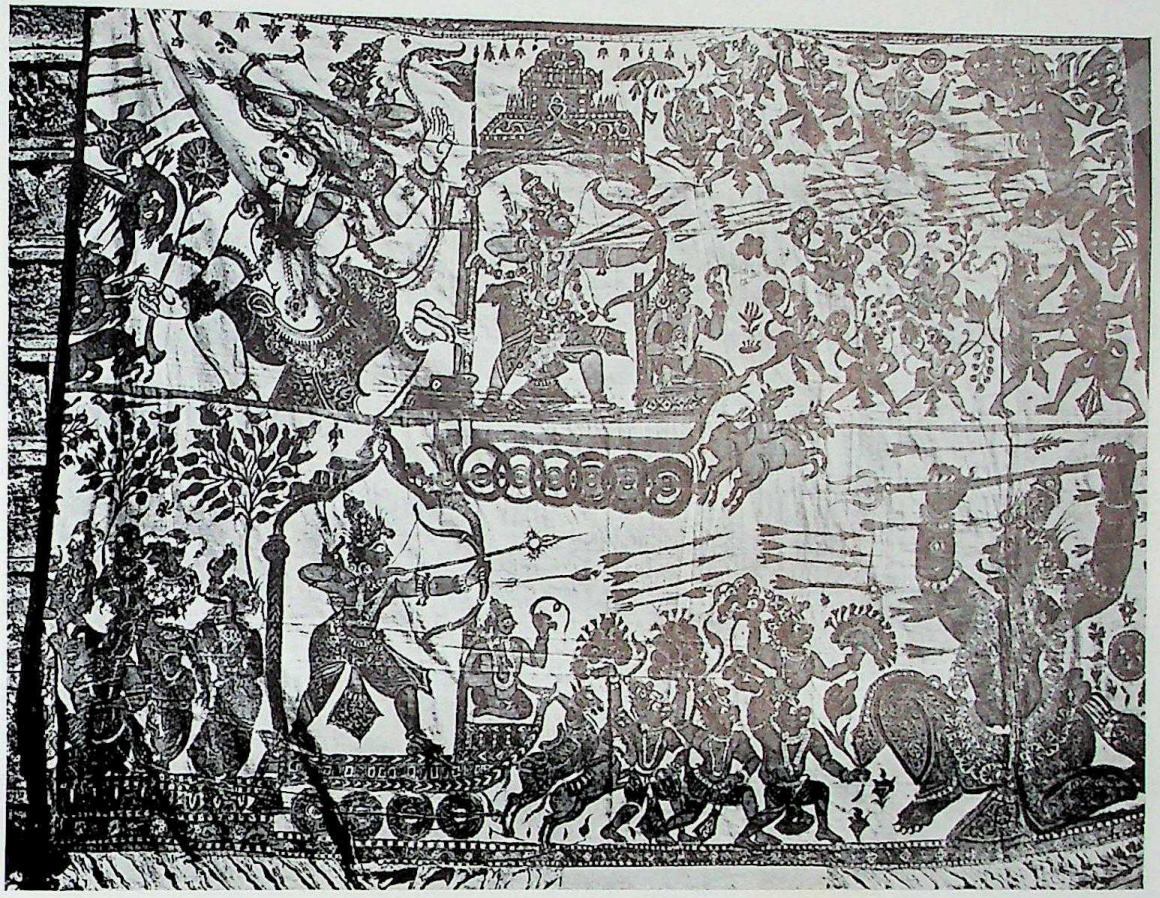
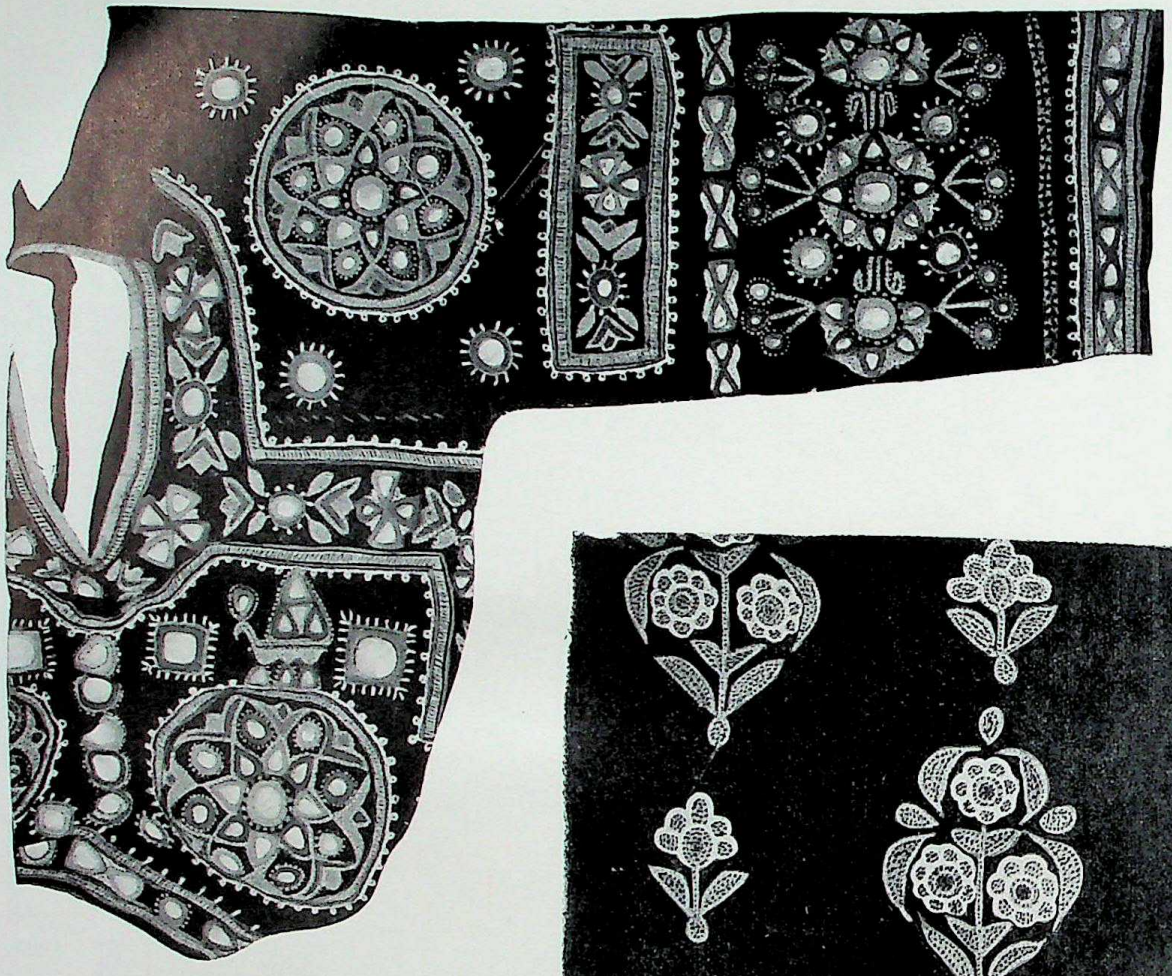


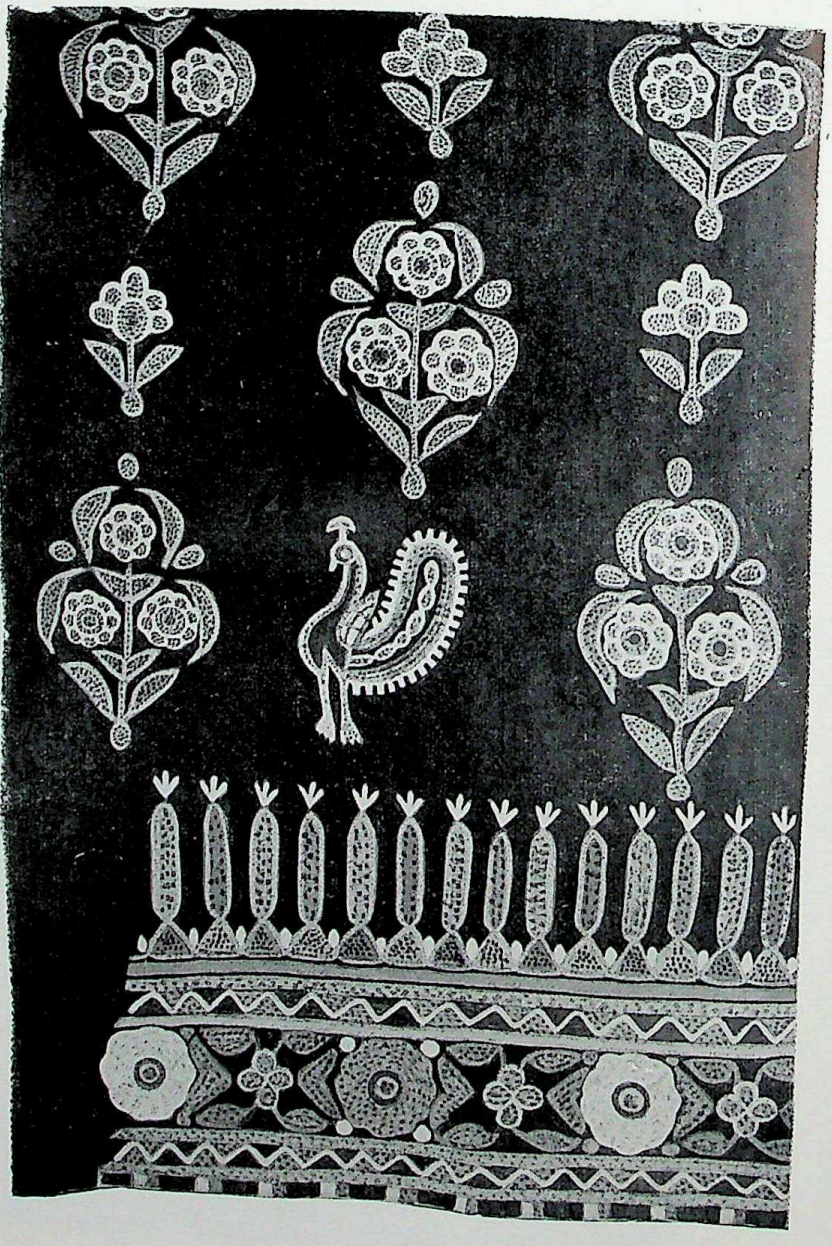
SUPERB EXAMPLE OF AN OLD HAND PRINTED TEXTILE

YELLOW SILK SKIRT CLOTH WITH FLOWER EMBROIDERY, FROM SAURASHTRA (?)
19th century
(Courtesy, *Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery*)

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



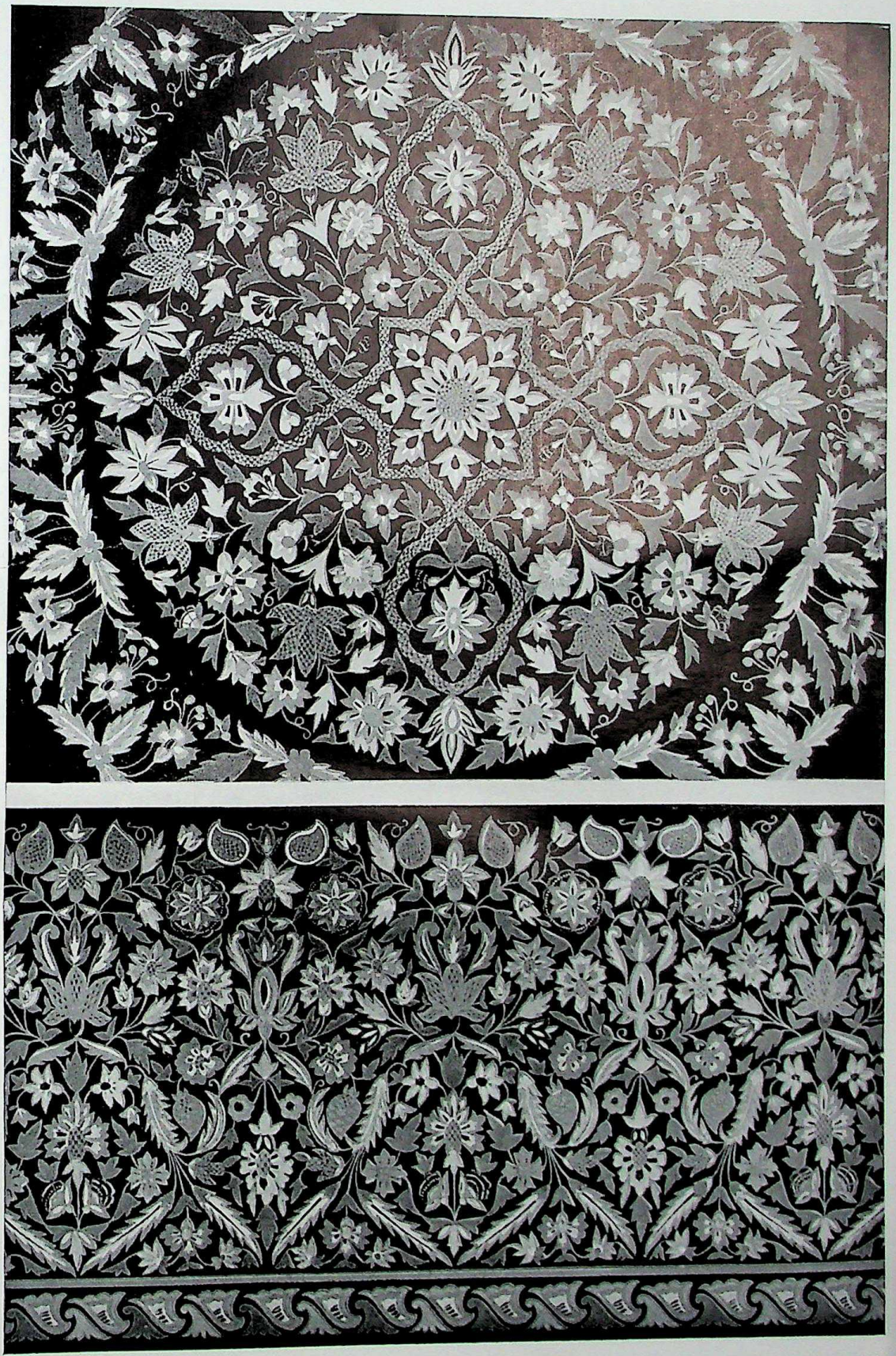
PART OF AN EMBROIDERED CHOLI
An example of primitive embroidery of the Rubaris



AN EXAMPLE OF PRIMITIVE EMBROIDERY
A petticoat of the Rubari tribe

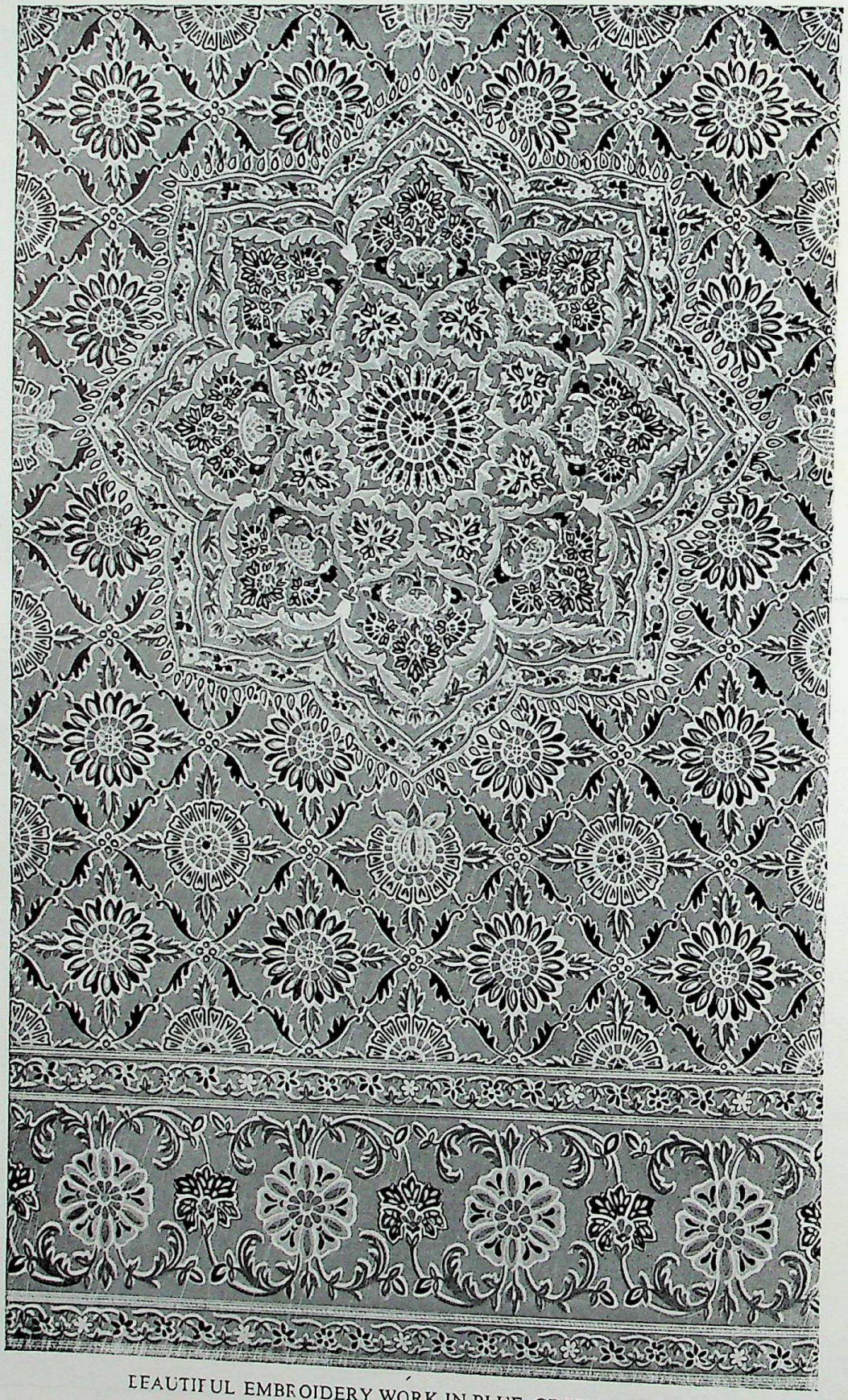
(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. II)

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



SPECIMENS OF BEAUTIFUL EMBROIDERY IN VIVID BUT HARMONIOUS COLOURS ON BLACK CLOTH
(From *Industrial Arts of the XIXth Century at the Great Exhibition* by M. Digby Wyatt)

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

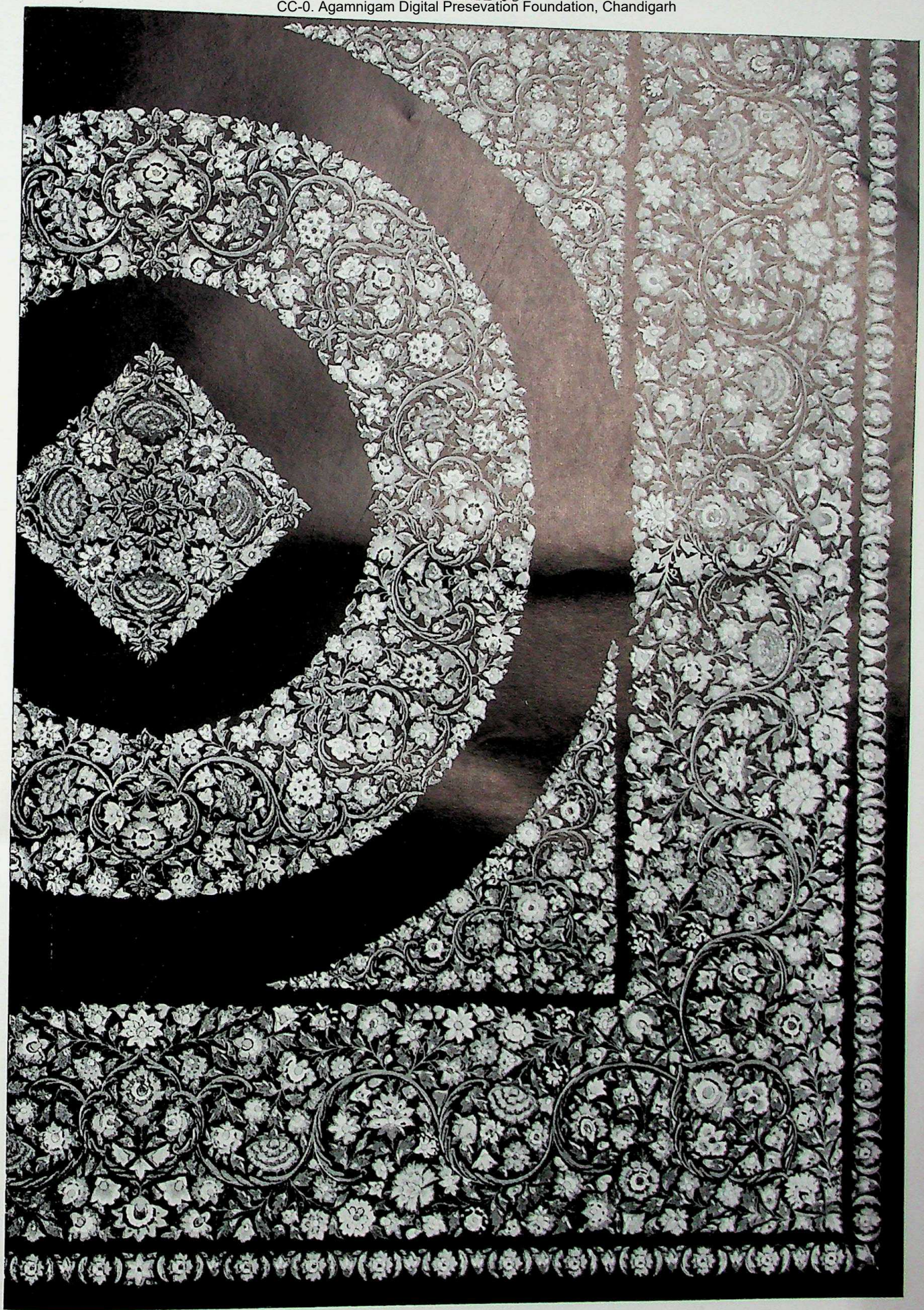


BEAUTIFUL EMBROIDERY WORK IN BLUE, GREEN, WHITE, AND YELLOW ON CRIMSON SILK

This is a sort of appliqué work, small pieces of various materials having been cut out and sewn on the ground cloth

(From *Industrial Arts of the XIXth Century at the Great Exhibition* by M. Digby Wyatt)

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



BEAUTIFUL EMBROIDERY FROM HYDERABAD

Although embroidered by Mohammedan artisans, the design is peculiarly Hindu in style—minute, elaborate and complicated

(From *Masterpieces of Industrial Art and Sculpture at the International Exhibition* 1862 by J. B. Waring)

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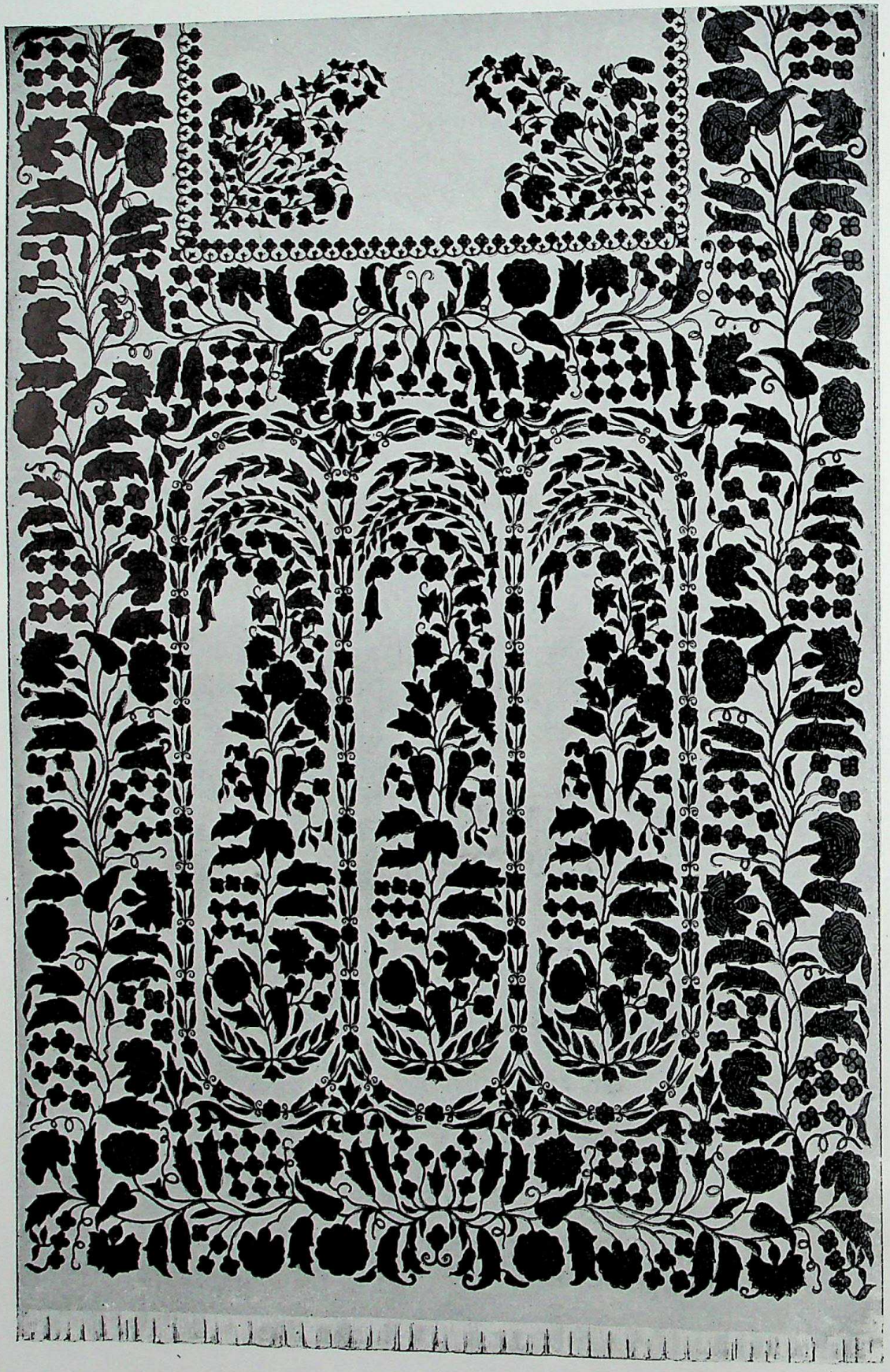
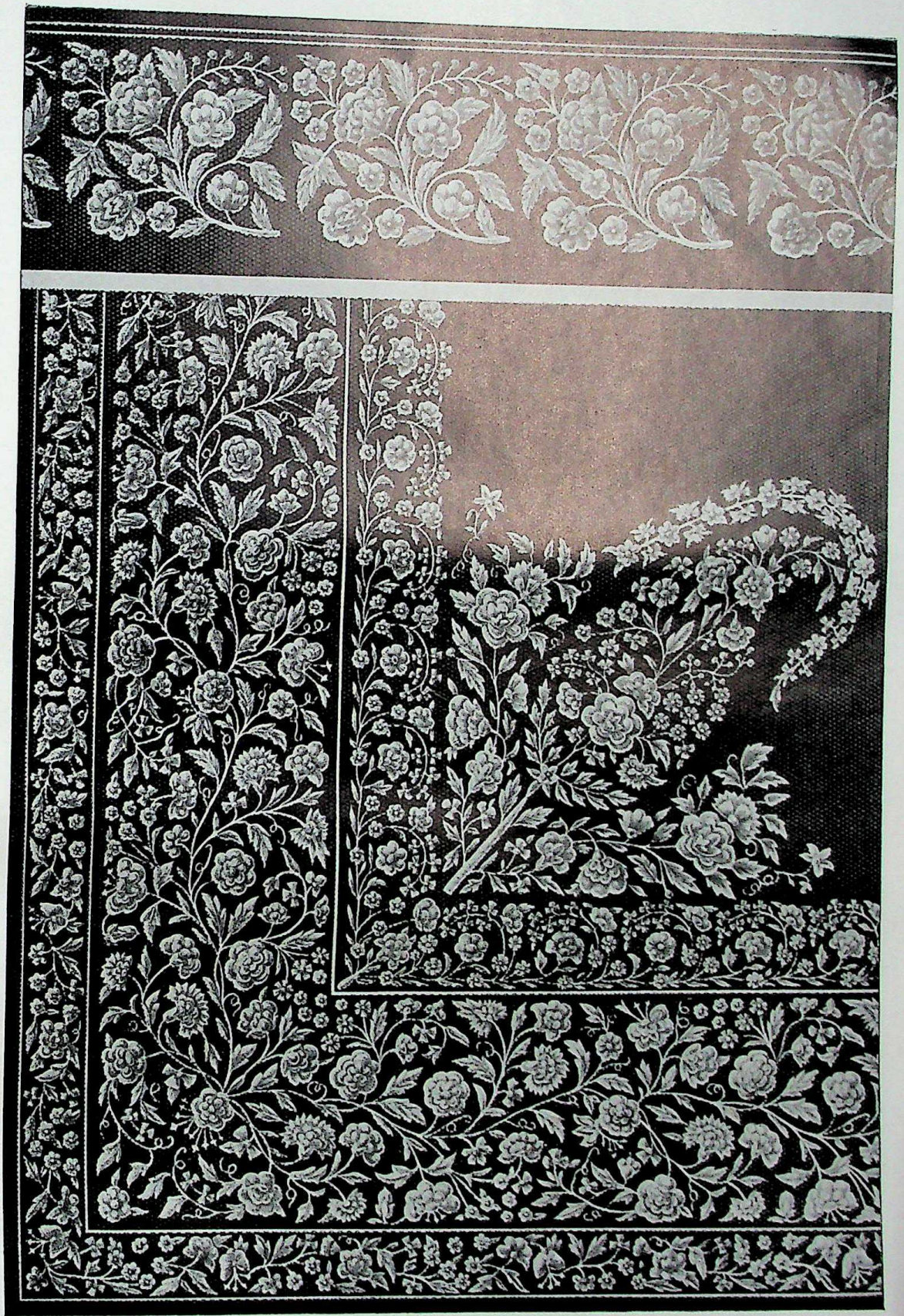


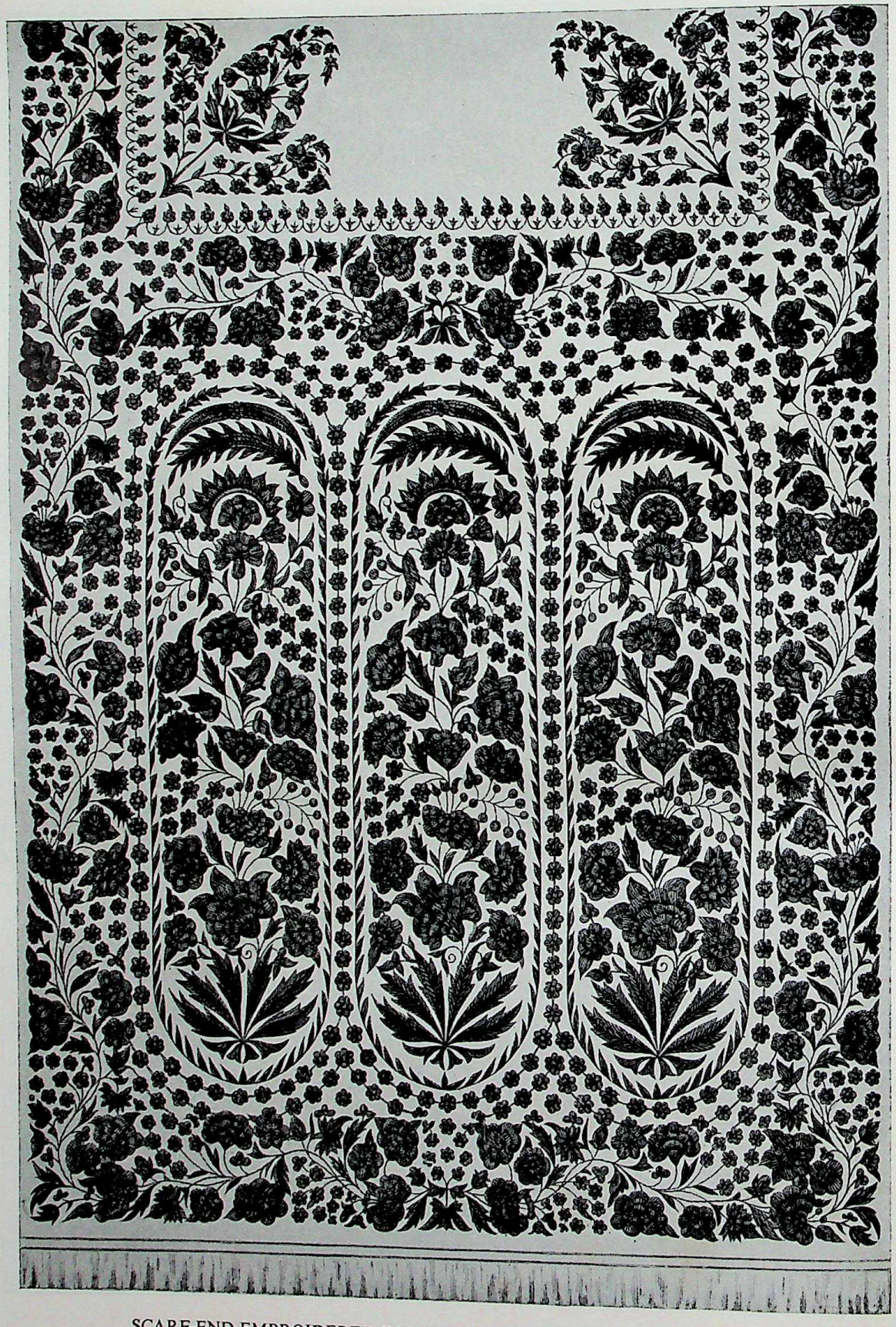
SPECIMEN OF INDIAN EMBROIDERY FROM DACCA
(From *Industrial Arts of the XIX Century at the Great Exhibition* by M. Digby Wyatt)

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



EMBROIDERY IN WHITE SILK ON BLACK NET FROM DACCA
(From *Industrial Art of the XIXth Century at the Great Exhibition* by M. Digby Wyatt)

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



SCARF-END EMBROIDERED IN BLUE ON WHITE MUSLIN, FROM DACCA
(From *Industrial Arts of the XIXth Century at the Great Exhibition* by M. Digby Wyatt)

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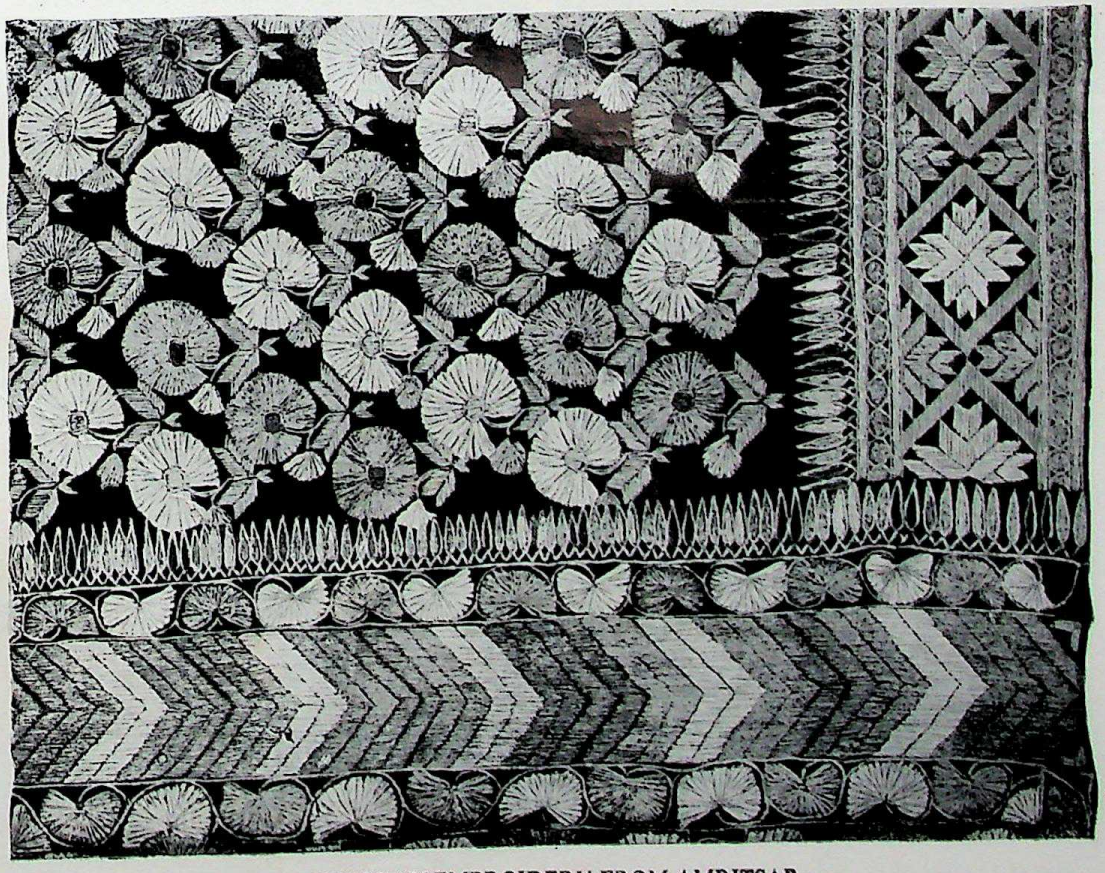
AN OLD EMBROIDERER OF KASHMIR
(*Photo*: Damodar Hansraj)



PHULKARI EMBROIDERY FROM AMRITSAR
(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*)

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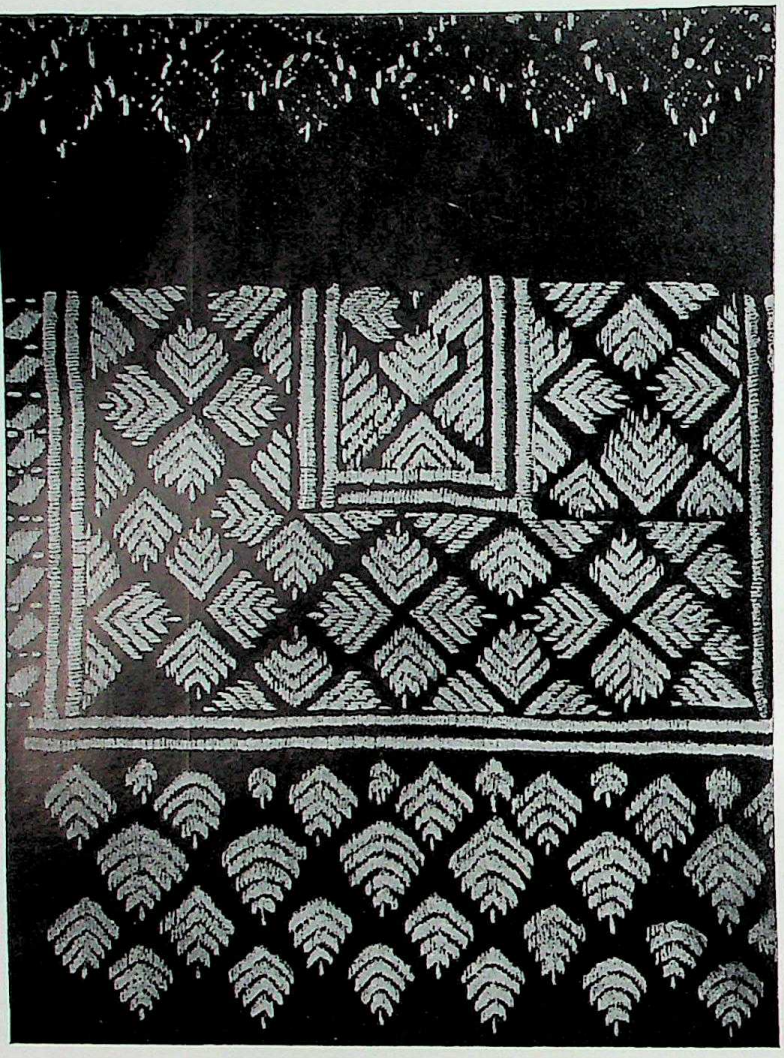

EXAMPLE OF PHULKARI WORK FROM THE ROHTAK DISTRICT, EAST PUNJAB

With orange stitches on a reddish-brown ground

A VERY OLD BORDER IN PHULKARI WORK FROM THE PUNJAB

Showing highly decorative darning stitch

(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. II)

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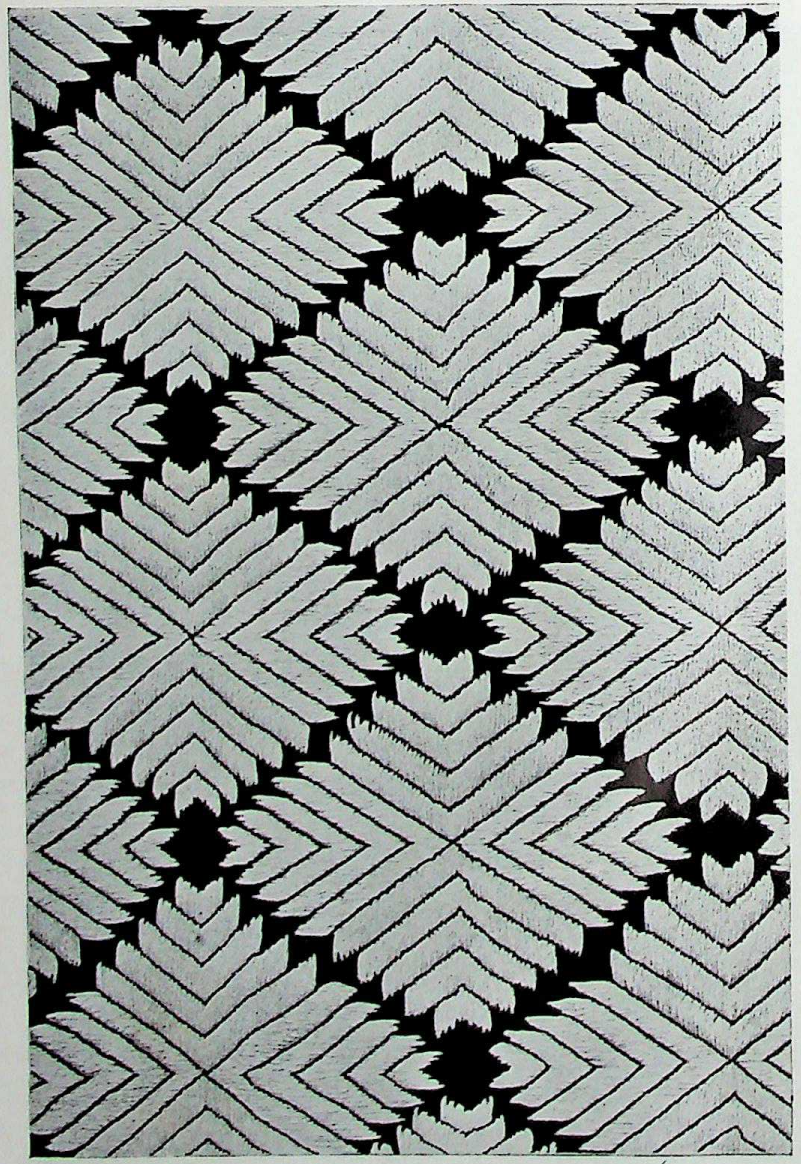
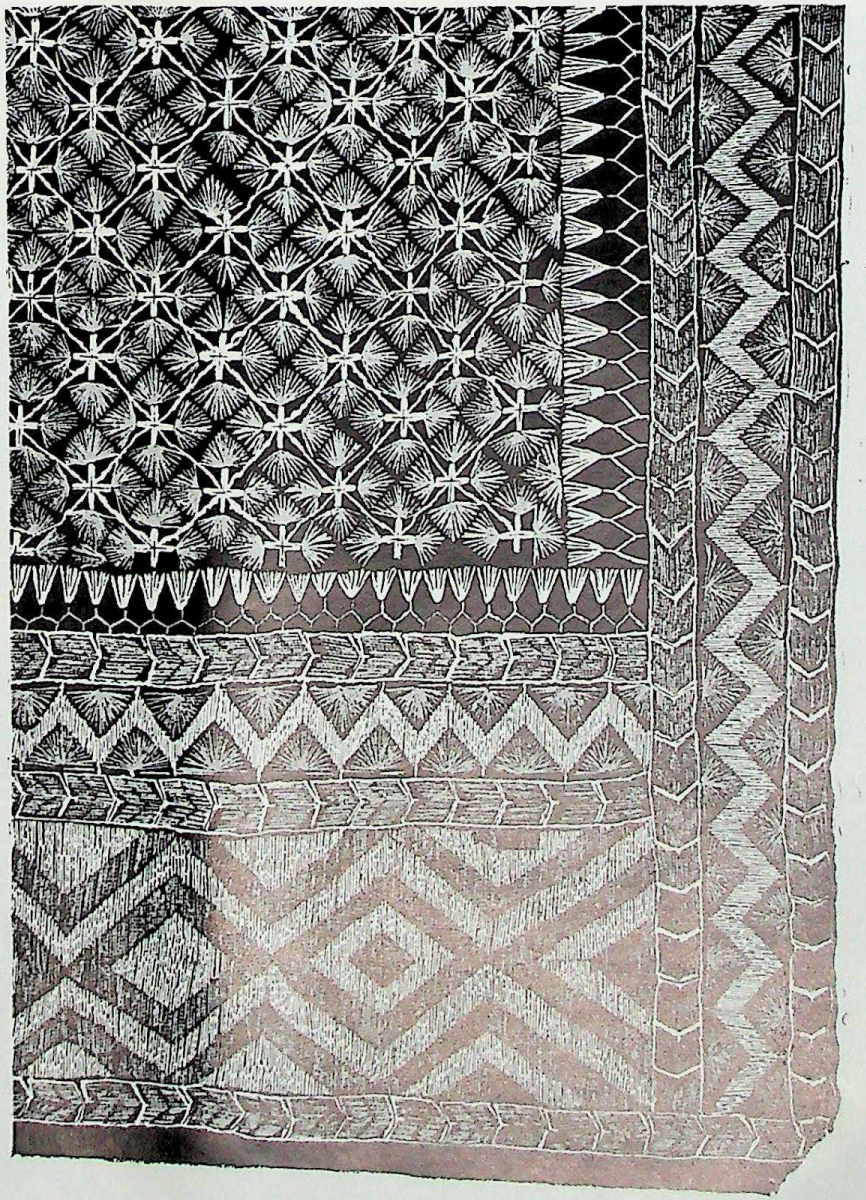


BAGH TARA. PERFECT EXAMPLE OF PURE DIAPERING IN PHULKARI WORK FROM HAZARA DISTRICT, EAST PUNJAB



EMBROIDERED SARI IN PHULKARI WORK FROM AMRITSAR WITH A BEAUTIFUL BORDER IN EXCELLENT COLOURING

(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. II)

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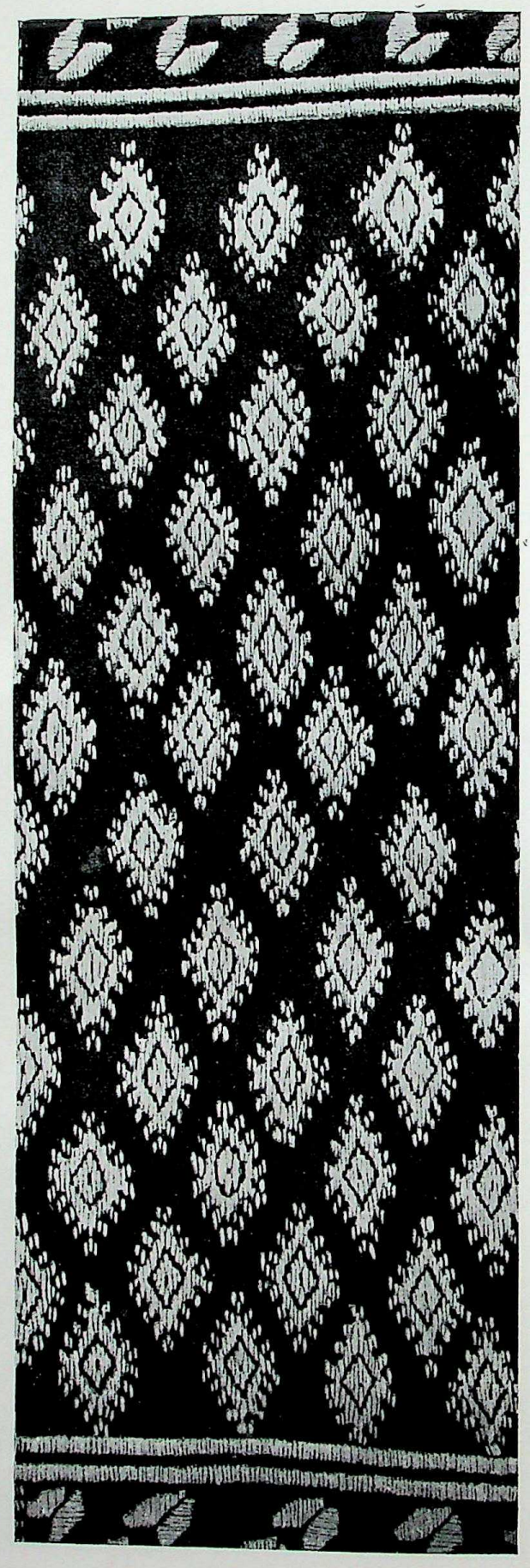
Orange stitches on maroon ground



Orange stitches on black ground

EXAMPLES OF PHULKARI WORK FROM THE ROHTAK DISTRICT, EAST PUNJAB

(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. II)

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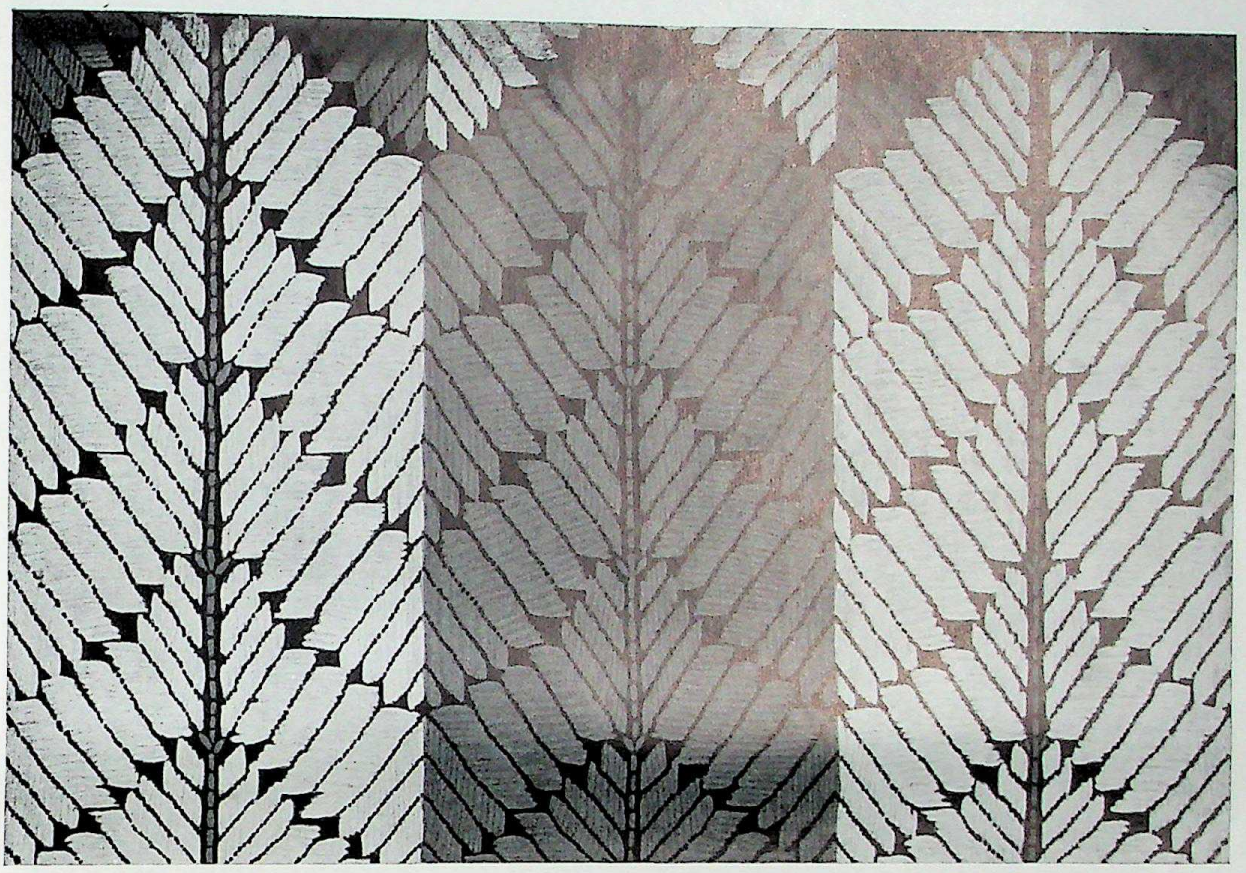
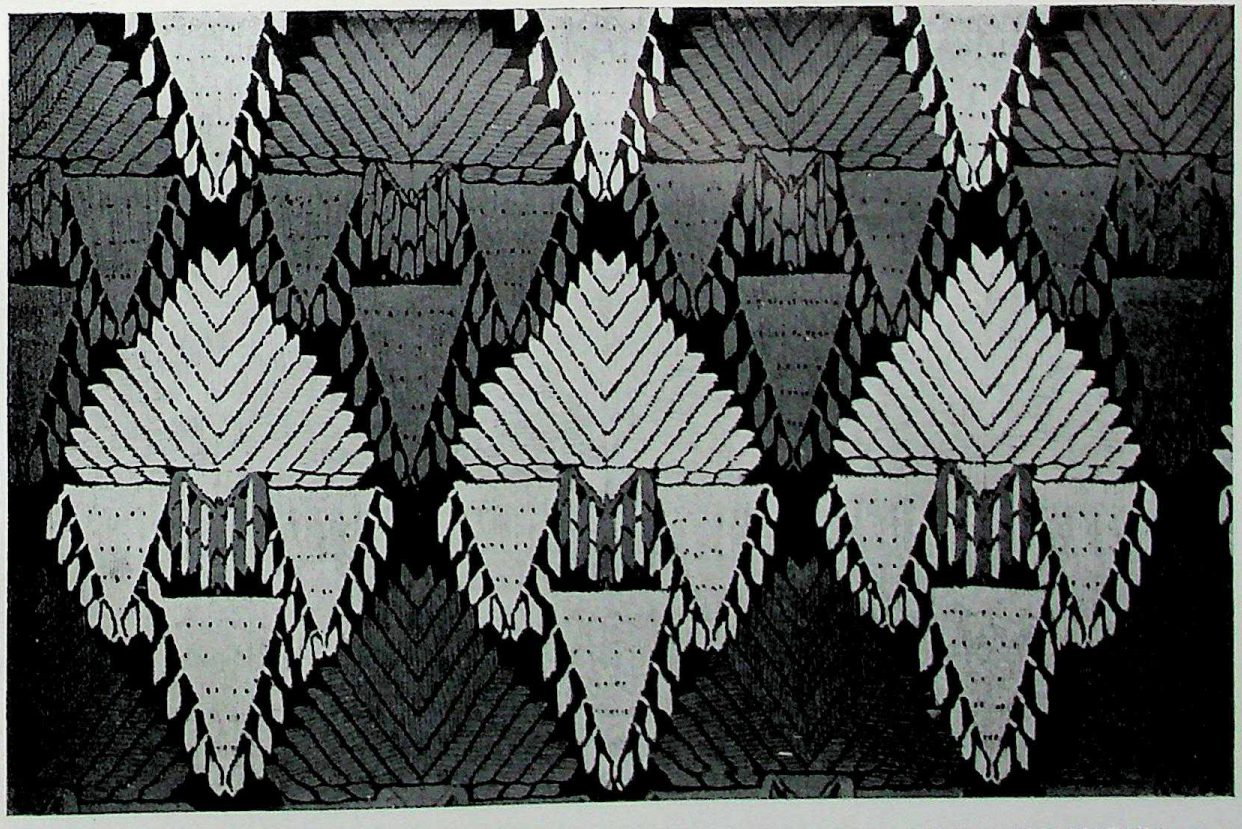


GOOD DARNING STITCH IN PHULKARI WORK (BAGH CHINTI) FROM HAZARA DISTRICT, PUNJAB



FINE SPECIMEN OF DIAPER WORK IN PHULKARI EMBROIDERY (BAGH KAKRI) FROM HAZARA DISTRICT, PUNJAB

(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. II)

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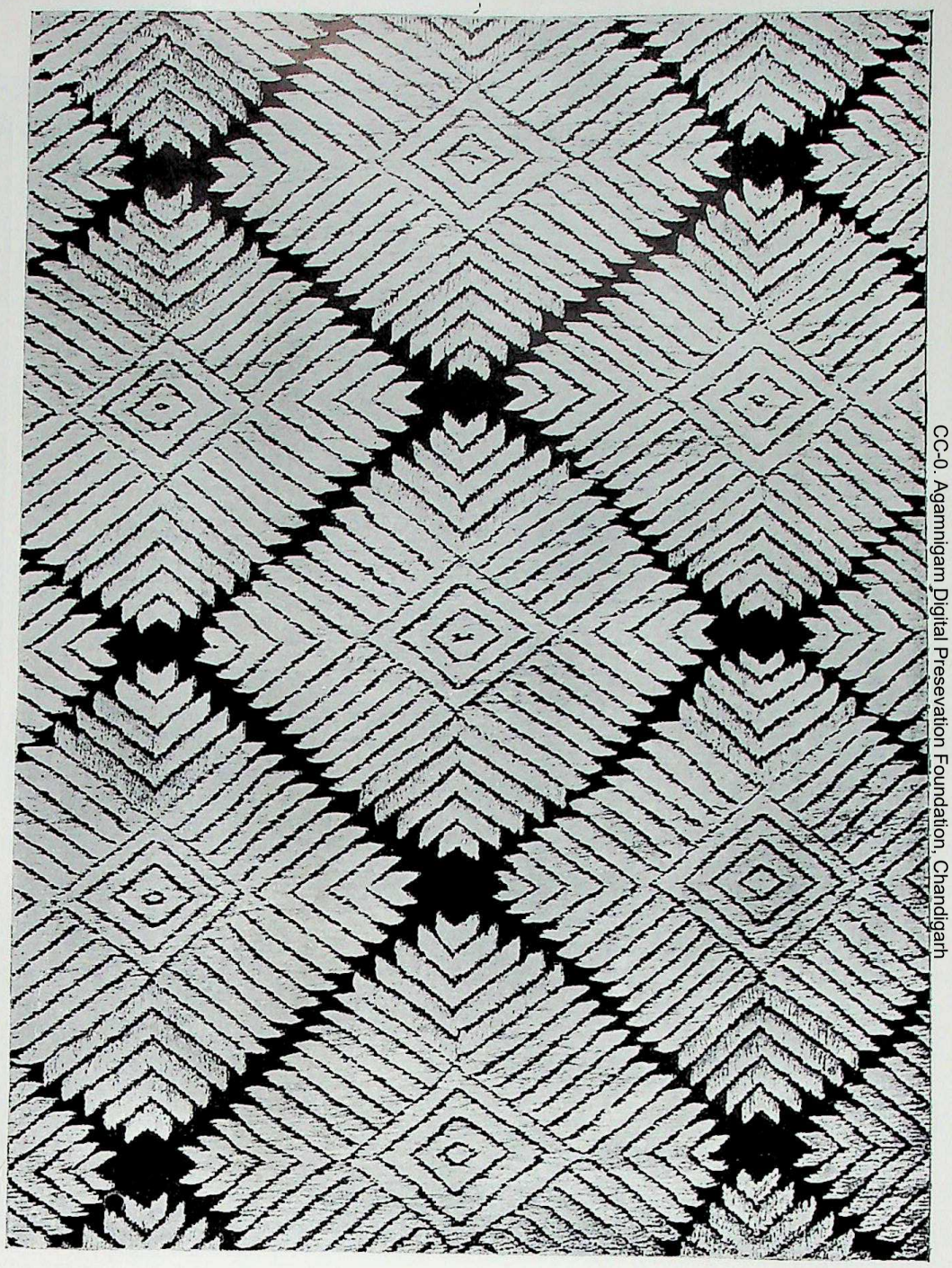
Bagh Anar



Bagh Chand

FINE SPECIMENS OF PURE DIAPERING IN PHULKARI WORK FROM HAZARA DISTRICT, PUNJAB

(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. II)

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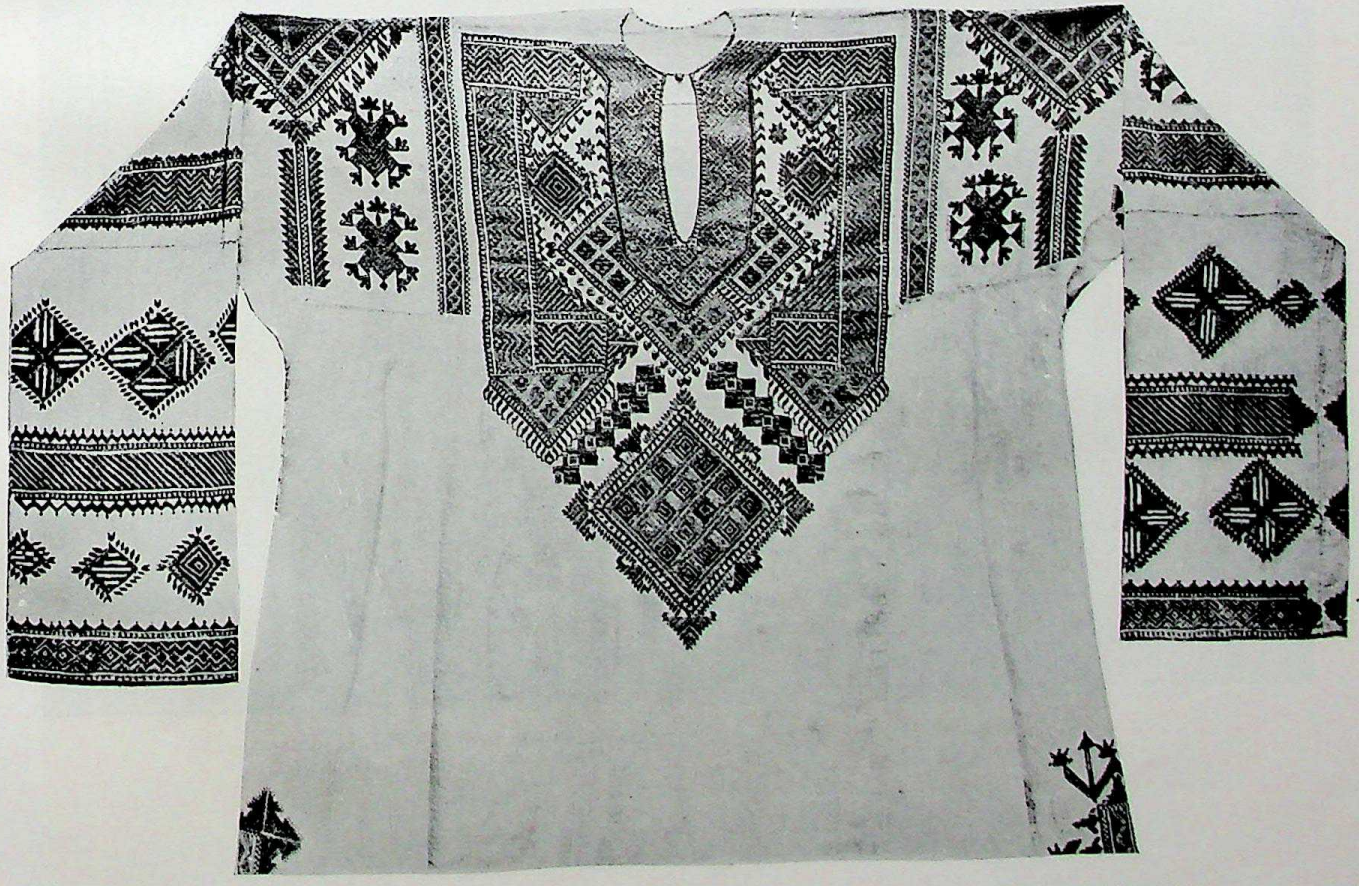
THREE EMBROIDERED HEAD CAPES

(From *Broderies Hindoues*)



PHULKARI WORK. WHITE COTTON BLOUSE EMBROIDERED WITH COLOURED FLOSS SILKS

(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. II)

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OLD EMBROIDERY DESIGNS

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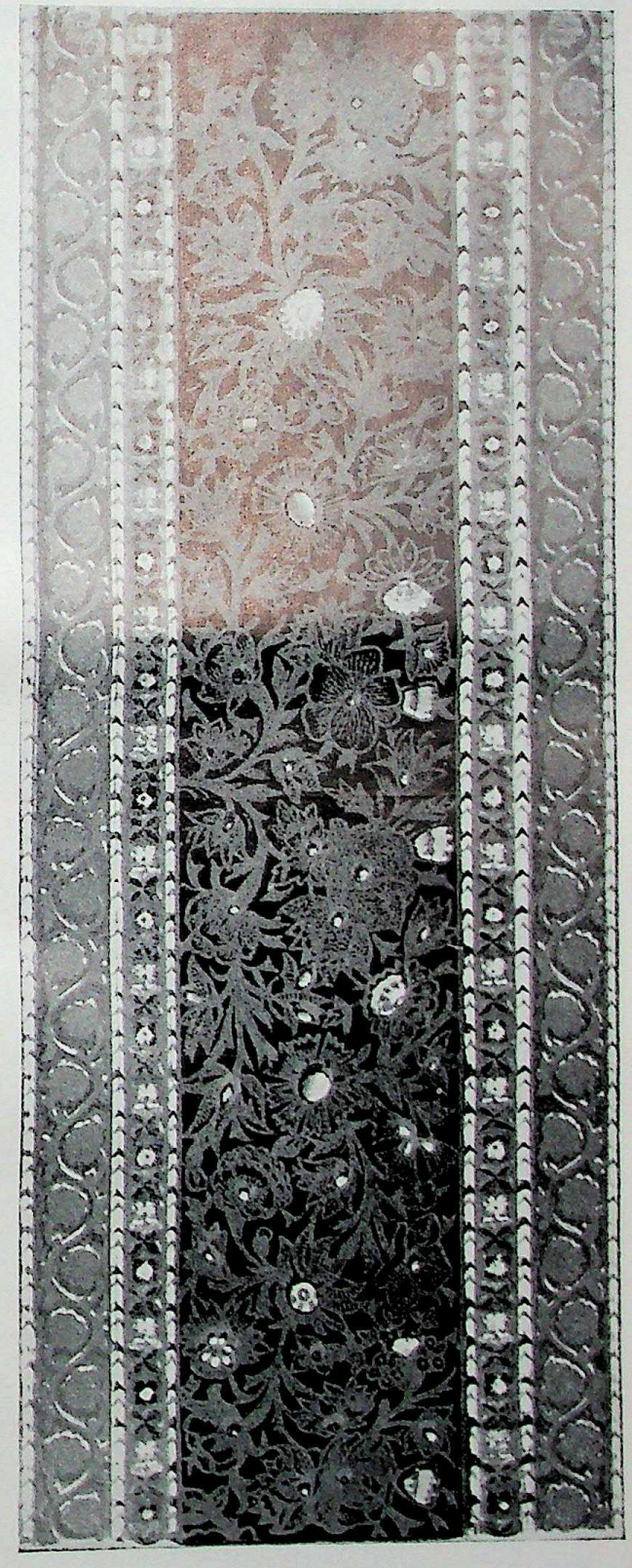
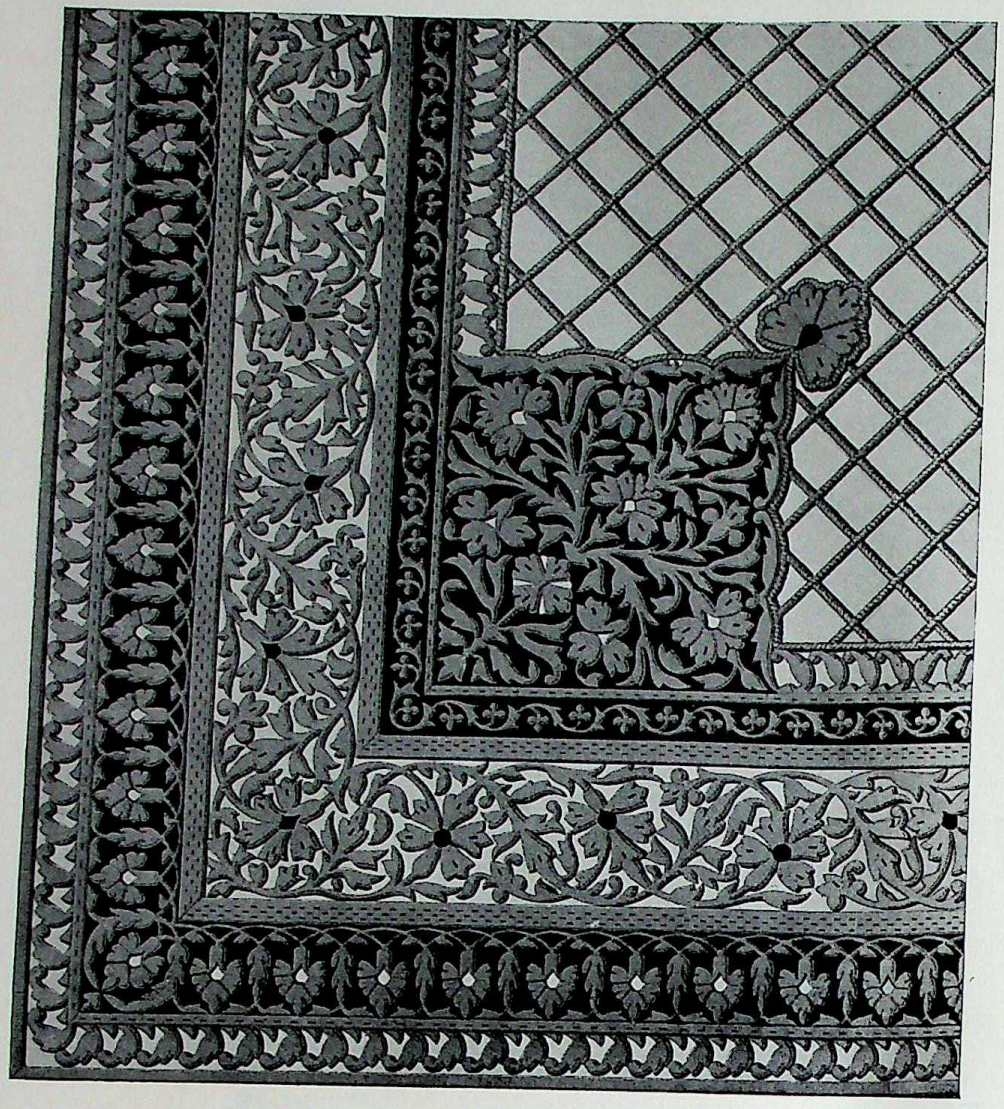
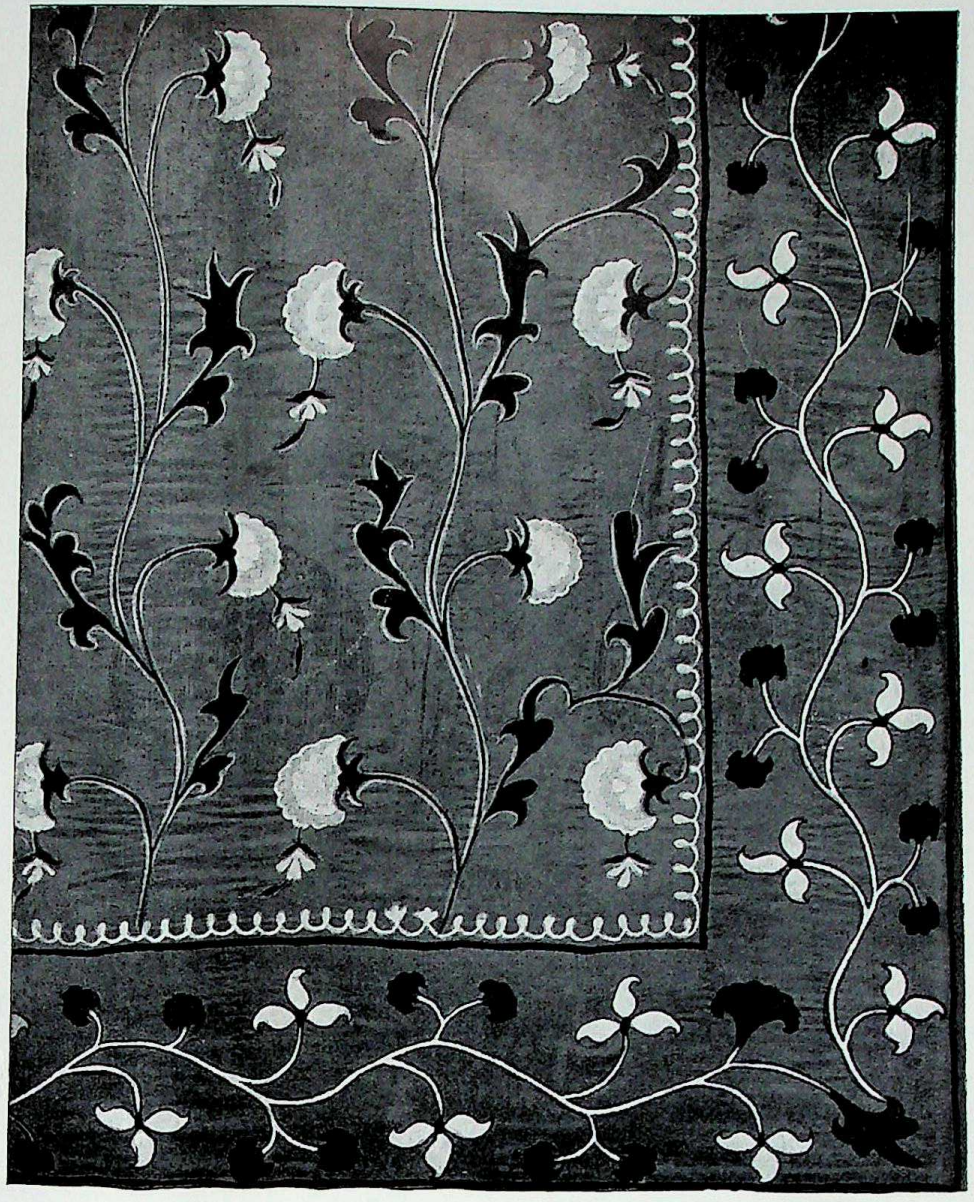


OLD EMBROIDERY DESIGNS



SPECIMEN OF INDIAN BULLION EMBROIDERY IN METALLIC THREAD
(From *Industrial Arts of the XIXth Century at the Great Exhibition* by M. Digby Wyatt)



EMBROIDERED WOOLLEN BLANKET FROM PESHAWAR
(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*)

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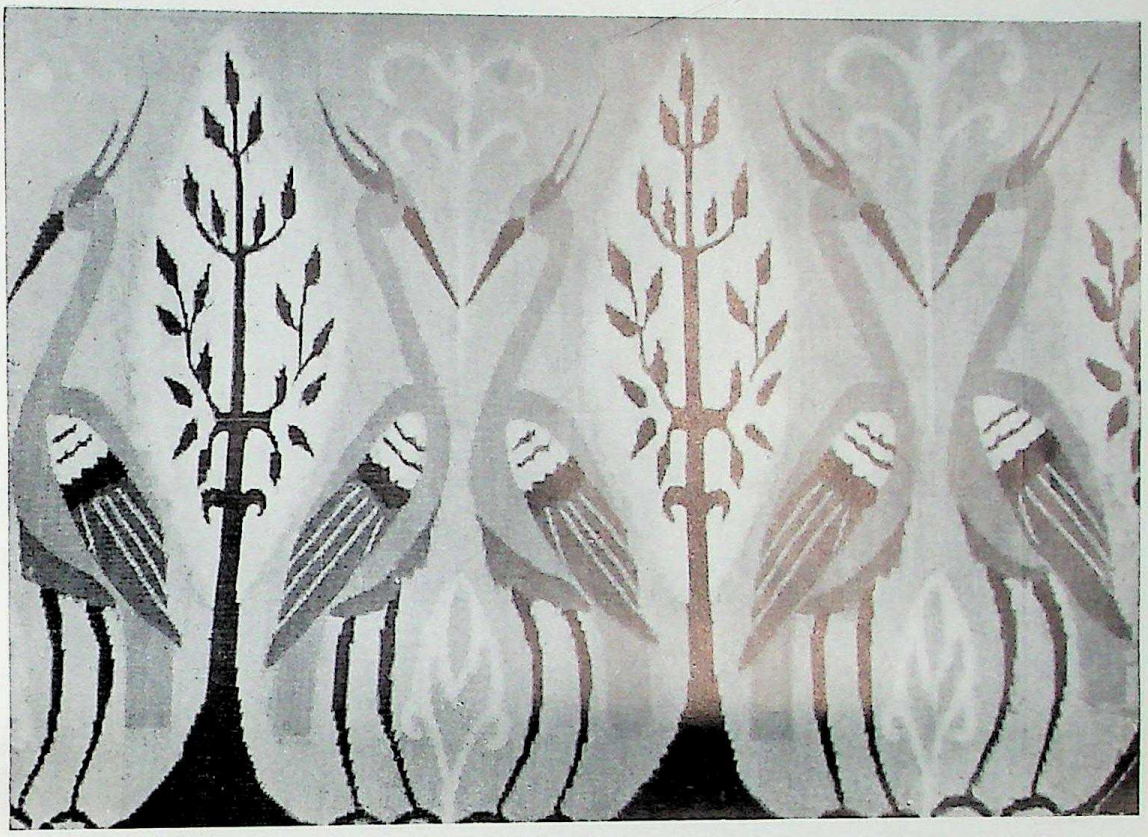

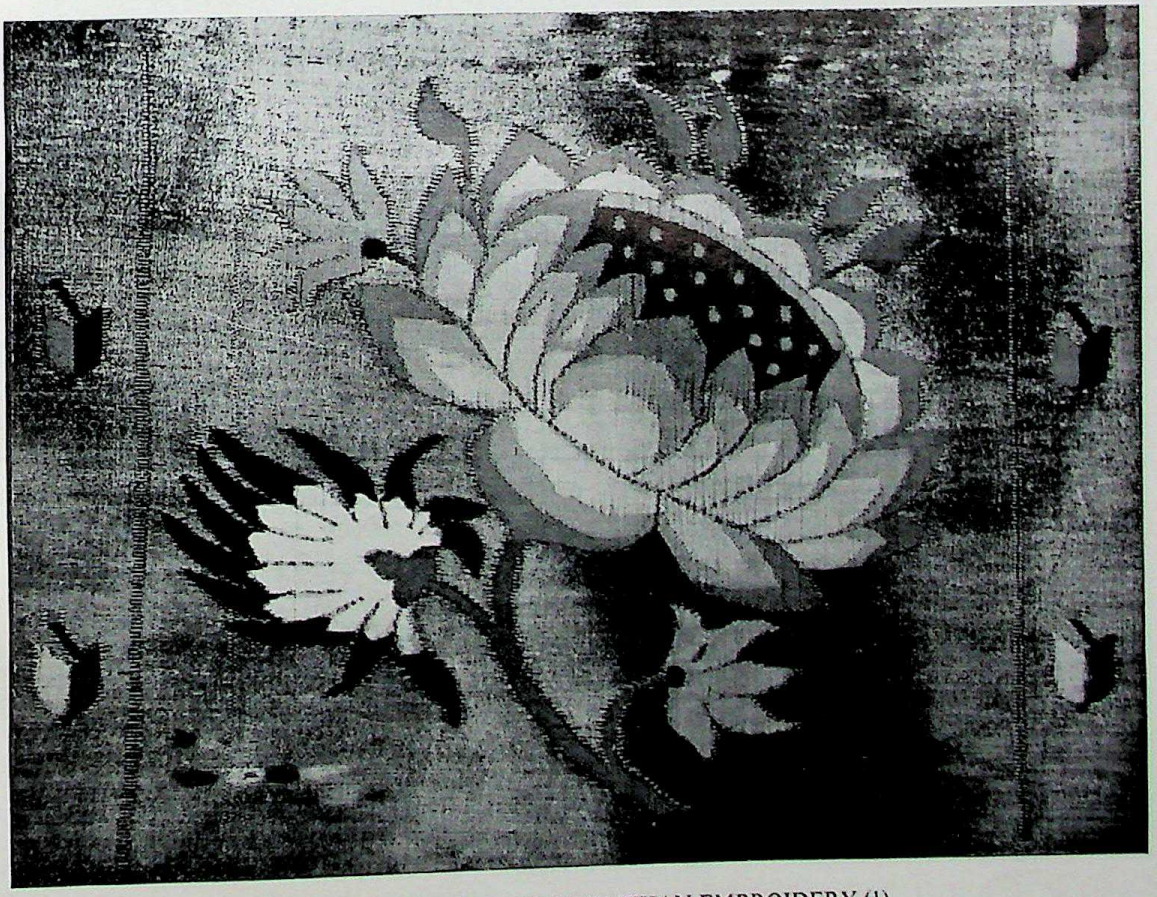

BEAUTIFUL EXAMPLES OF PAITHAN EMBROIDERY (I)

(*Photos*: E. S. Mahalingam)

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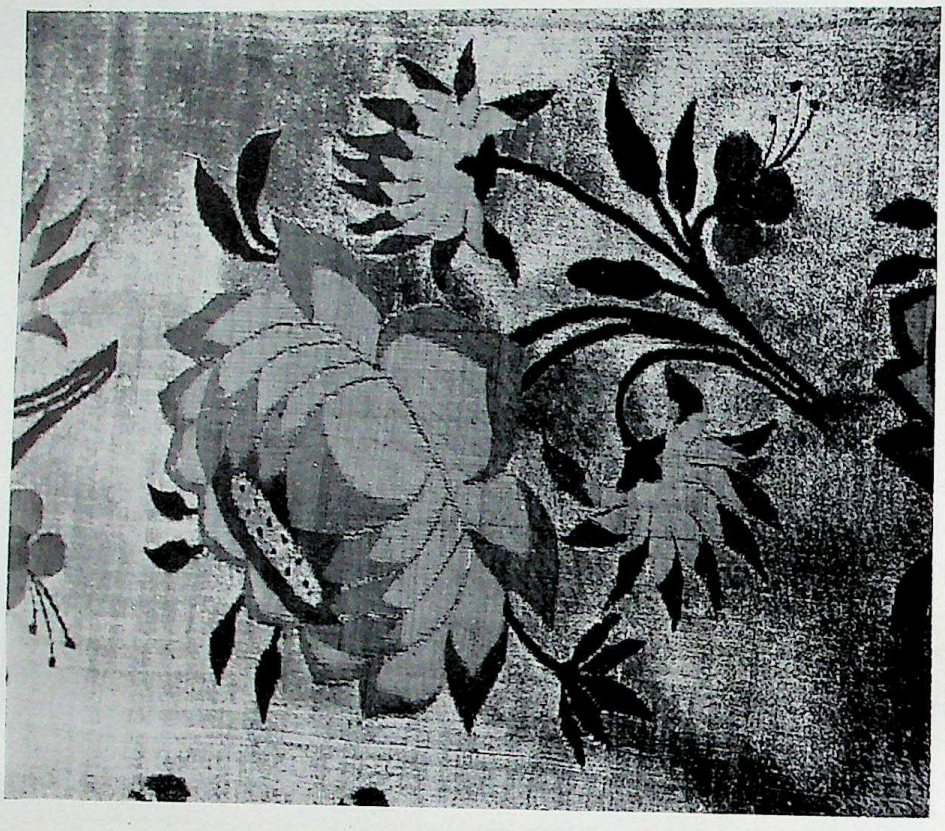
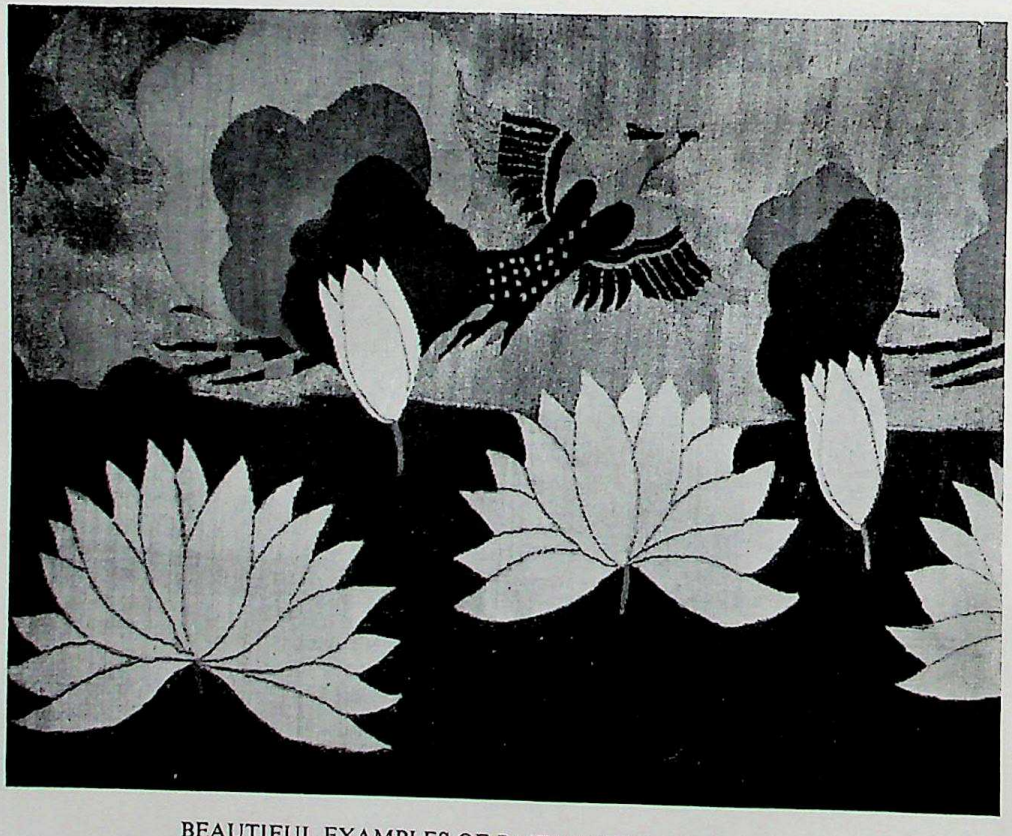
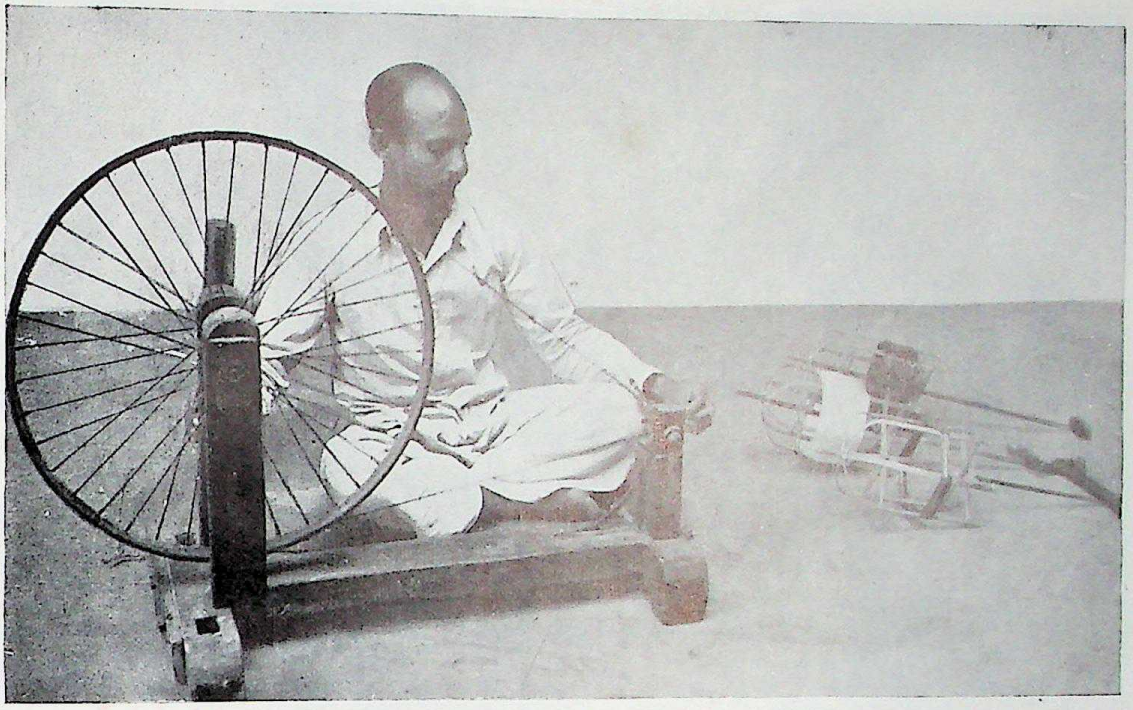




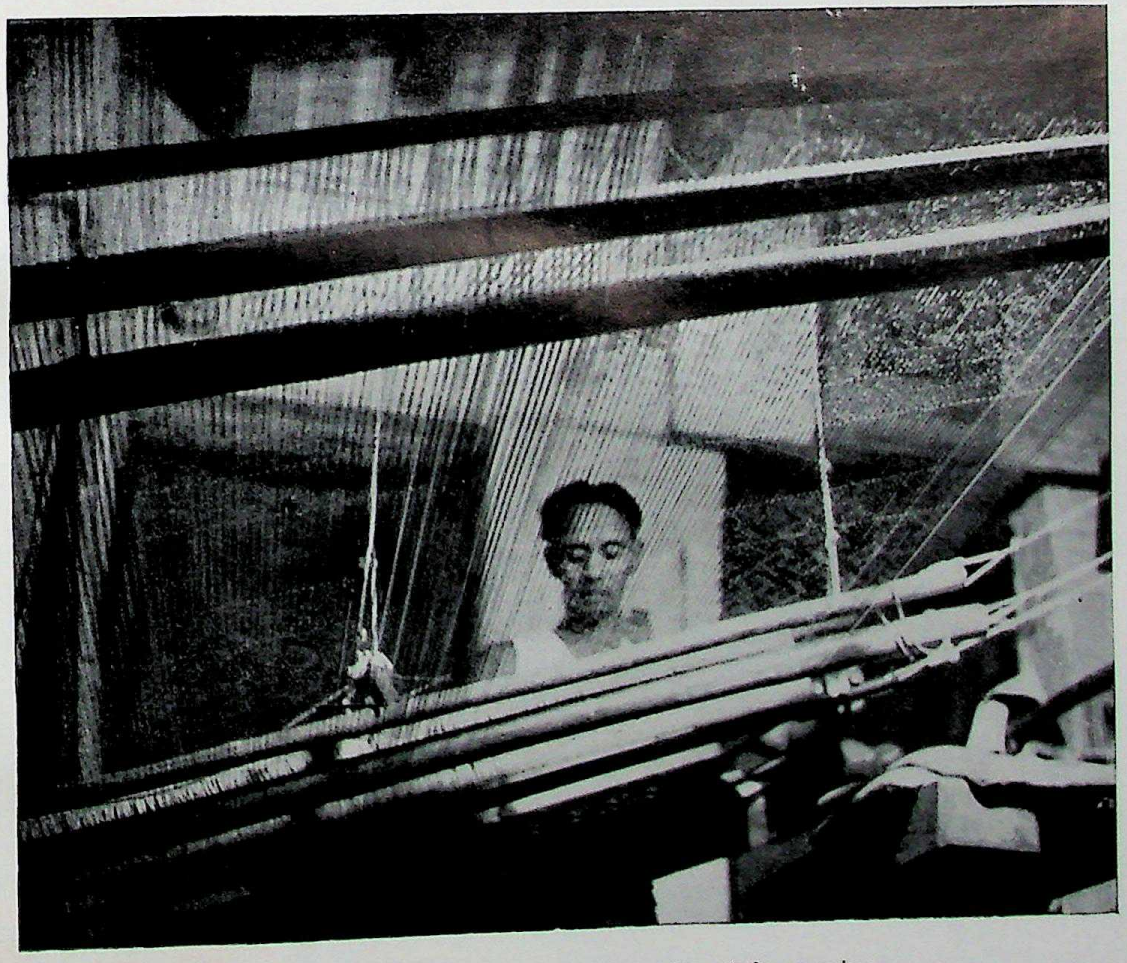
BEAUTIFUL EXAMPLES OF PAITHAN EMBROIDERY (2)

(*Photos*: E. S. Mahalingam)

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh



The Patan weavers use only simple gadgets like the bicycle wheel shown here and used for winding the silk threads



The dyed silk threads are spread on a loom before weaving

THE PATOLA OF PATAN (1)

(*Photos*: P. R. Shinde)

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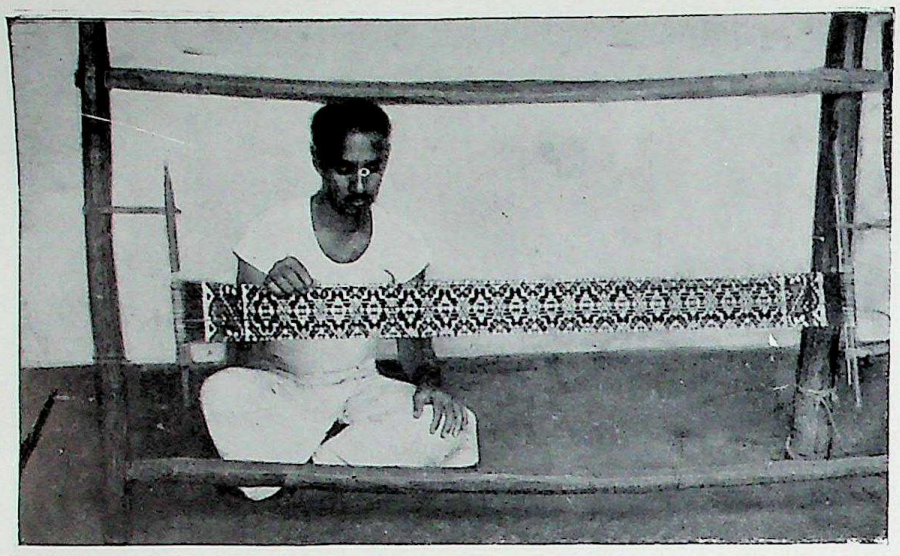
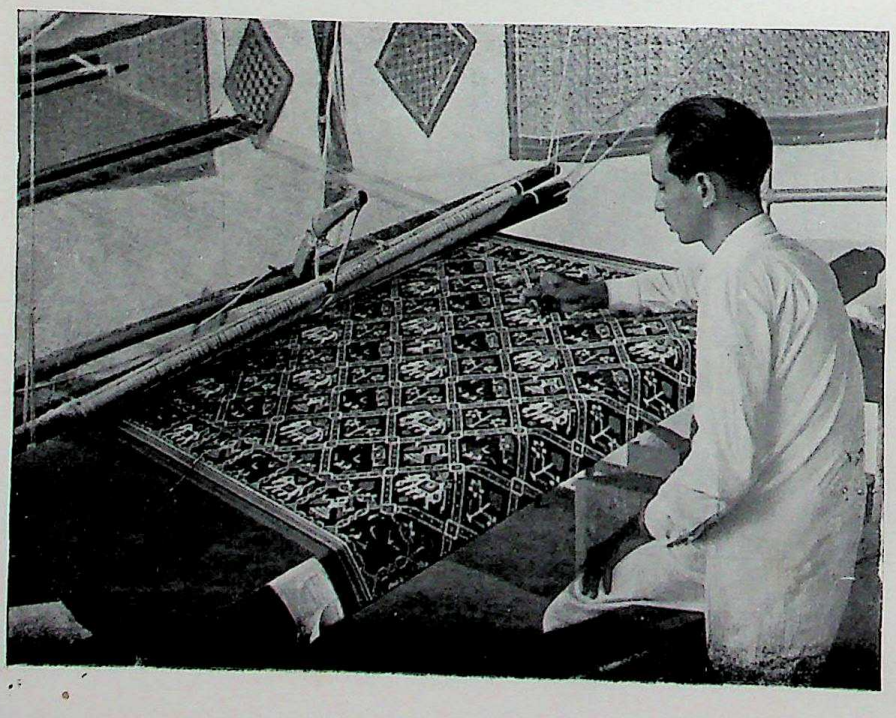


1. First a strip is woven by hand on a wooden frame as a guide for the pattern and colour scheme for the final patola

2. The patola is finally woven on a simple wooden frame, generally made of bamboos



3. The Patan weaver at work on his loom

THE PATOLA OF PATAN (2)

(*Photos*: P. R. Shinde)

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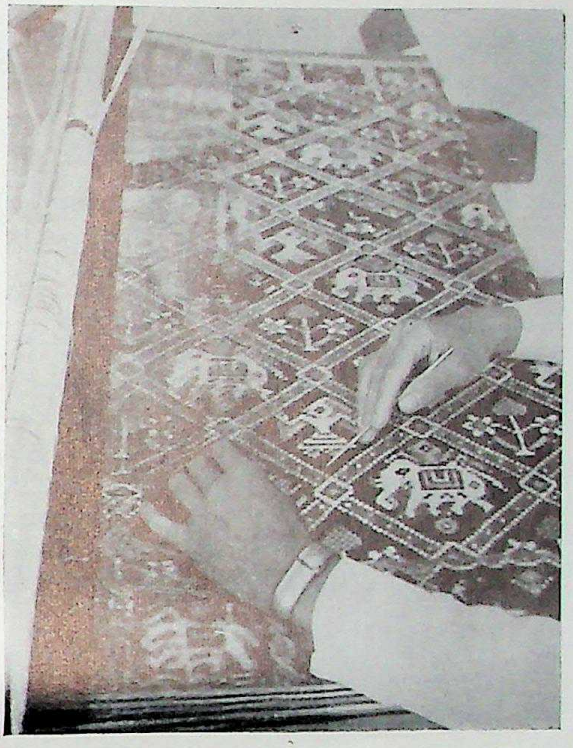

The motifs of the Patola are strictly Indian and traditional. Here is a well-known motifs consisting of elephants, flowers and leaves

Another traditional design

In Gujarat it is customary for the father to present a Patola to the girl getting married

THE PATOLA OF PATAN (3)
(*Photos*: P. R. Shinde)

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PATOLA OF PATAN IN RATAN CHOK DESIGN

PATOLA OF PATAN IN NARI-KUNJAR DESIGN

(Courtesy, *Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery*)

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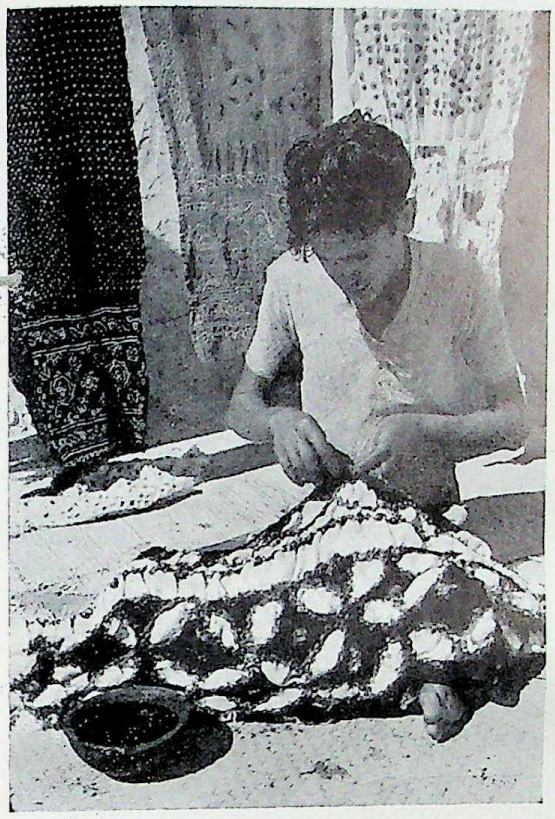
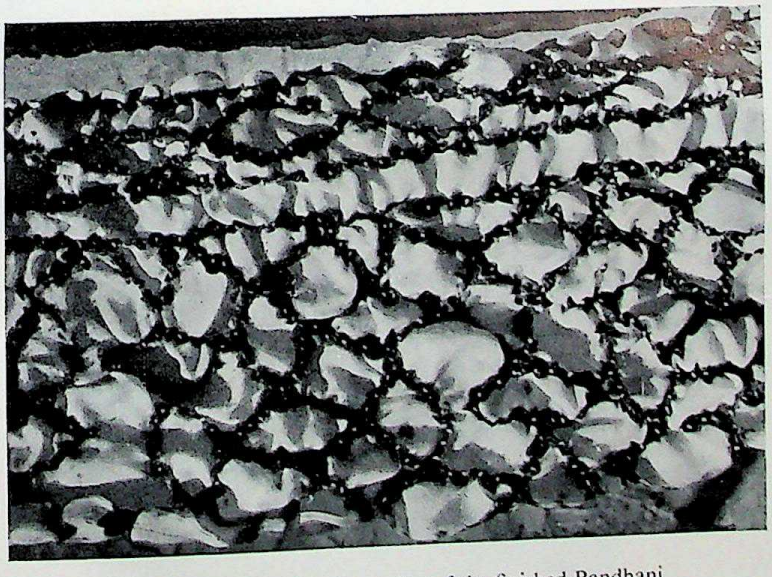
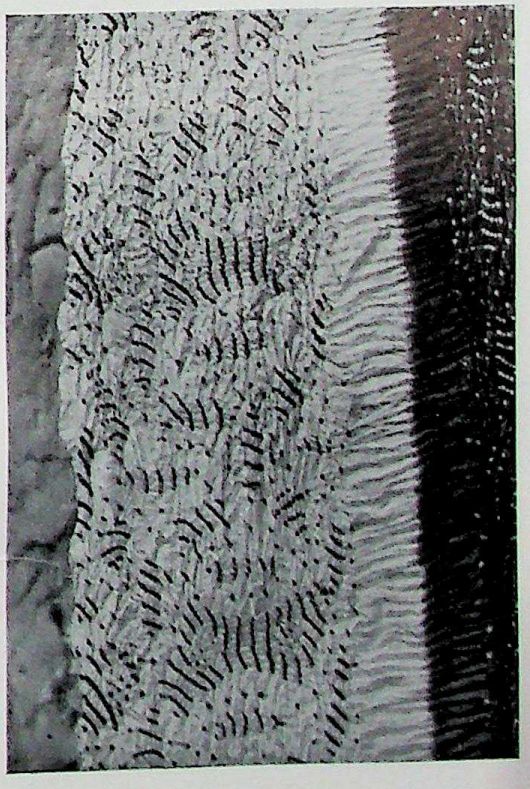


1. Tying the cloth into large knots
The knotted parts remain white after dyeing

2. Close-up of the process of tying the knots
several of which are made before dyeing



3. Close-up showing the design of the finished Bandhani



4. Close-up showing the smaller and finer knots

BANDHANI OR TIE-DYEING AND SPOT-DYEING (1)

(*Photos*: B. Bhansali)

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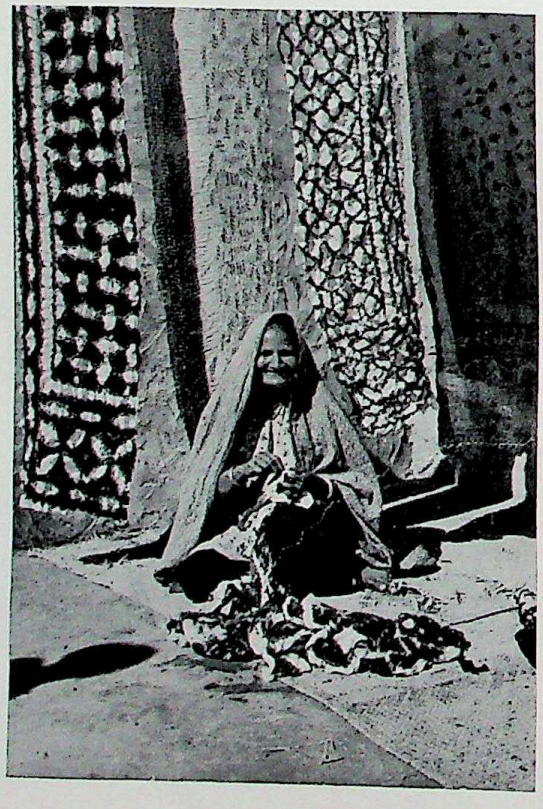
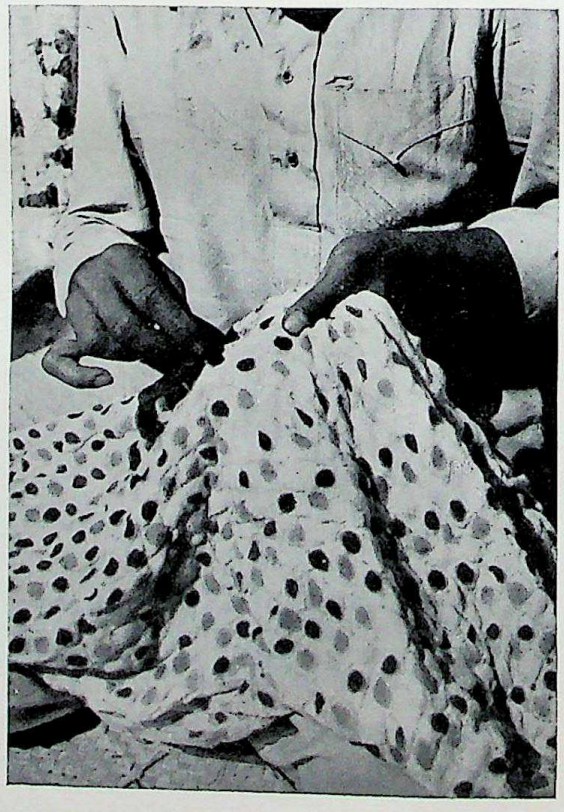
5. Family of dyers showing each stage in the process from knotting to spot-dyeing



6. The knotting is generally done by women



7. Spot-dyeing; cotton wool is dipped in colour and applied to the cloth

BANDHANI OR TIE-DYEING AND SPOT-DYEING (2)

(*Photos*: B. Bhansali)

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BANDHANI WORK FROM ALWAR

(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. 1)

BANDHANI SARI WITH RASALILA SCENES FROM AHMADABAD

(Courtesy, *Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery*)

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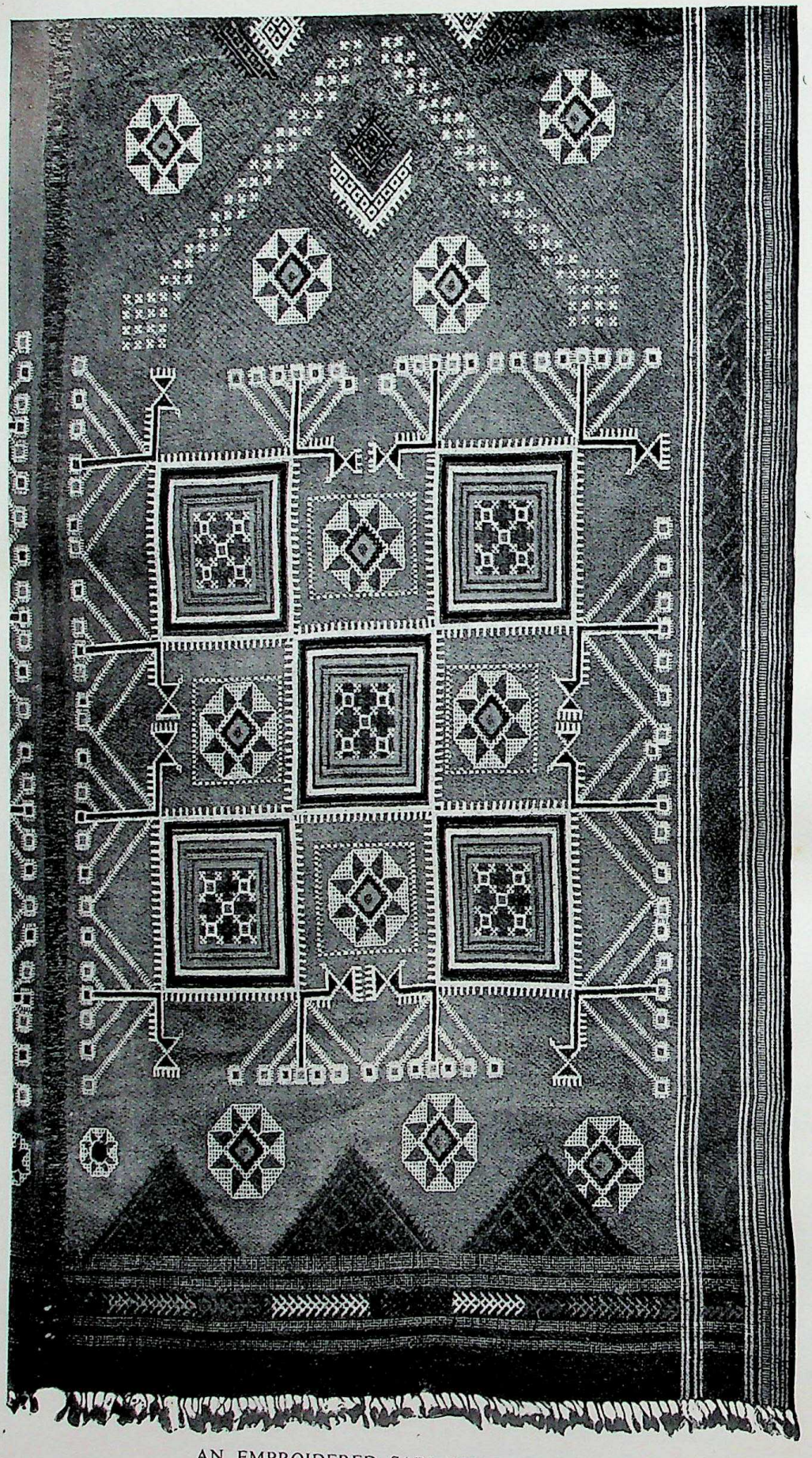

AN EMBROIDERED SARI FROM BIKANER

The elements of the designs of these saris are much the same—modifications of crosses, squares, stars and octagonal figures, with trees, birds and animals reduced to geometrical forms. There is always an economical use of wool and the stitches are not very numerous

(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. IV)

A beautiful floral border runs along this Baluchari silk sari, shot with tones of madder red and blue. A row of traditional *kalkas* is enclosed within the oblong panel of the *anchala*. The field is covered with small *butis*. The embroidery is done in cream silk threads; gold and silver threads are absent.

(*Photo*: Sebastian Fernandes of *Eve's Weekly*)

A fine textured subtle toned terracotta red cotton sari, worked all over the field with a novel ornamental creeper-like design in white, giving the sari a distinctive touch. This exquisite jamdani is worn during special festive occasions.

(Photo by Courtesy of
Illustrated Weekly of India)

A striking silk sari in deep emerald green which accentuates the design, printed in white—giving it an *alpona* like effect. The field is covered with small *butis*. In the *anchala*, kalkas are arranged in between the wide parallel stripes of floral design. The exquisite *anchala* adds an extravagant glamour to this handblock printed sari on Murshidabad silk.

(Sari by Courtesy of *Handloom House*)
(*Photo*: Comfotos)

THE SARIS OF INDIA (I)

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PLATE 79

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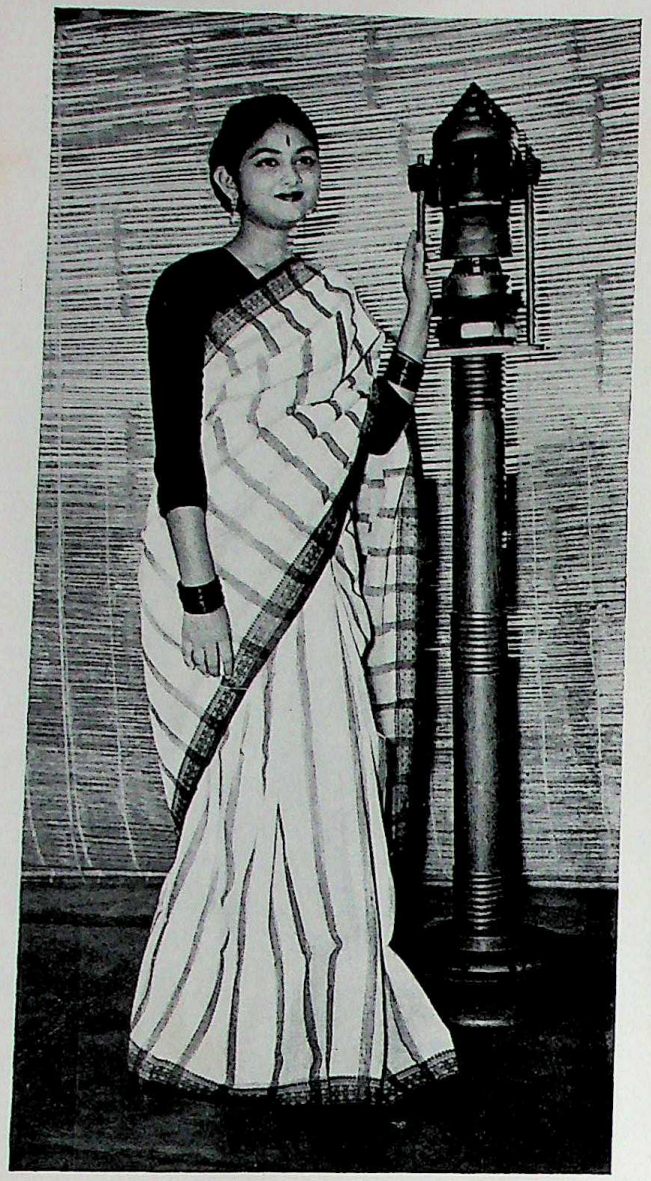

"Durays" (Stripes) of Santipure. Wide stripes of red, black, green, and yellow on white or coloured ground running horizontally, with coloured borders are common type of duray sari from Santipure. This is a white cotton sari with black borders in geometric design where the stripes are vertical

Dhonekhali sari. This plain white cotton sari for daily use, with wide borders, is draped in a traditional Bengal fashion. The design in the borders is woven in deep green and black with alternating stripes of red

A white cotton day-wear sari of Dacca type. The field is enlivened with small *butis* woven in red, black, green and yellow. The borders and *anchala* are woven in modern geometric design, where the same colours are repeated

(*Photos*: Sebastian Fernandes of *Eve's Weekly*)

THE SARIS OF INDIA (2)

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WOOLLEN CARPET FROM THE PUNJAB
(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. XI)

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WOOLLEN PILE CARPET FROM HYDERABAD
(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. XI)

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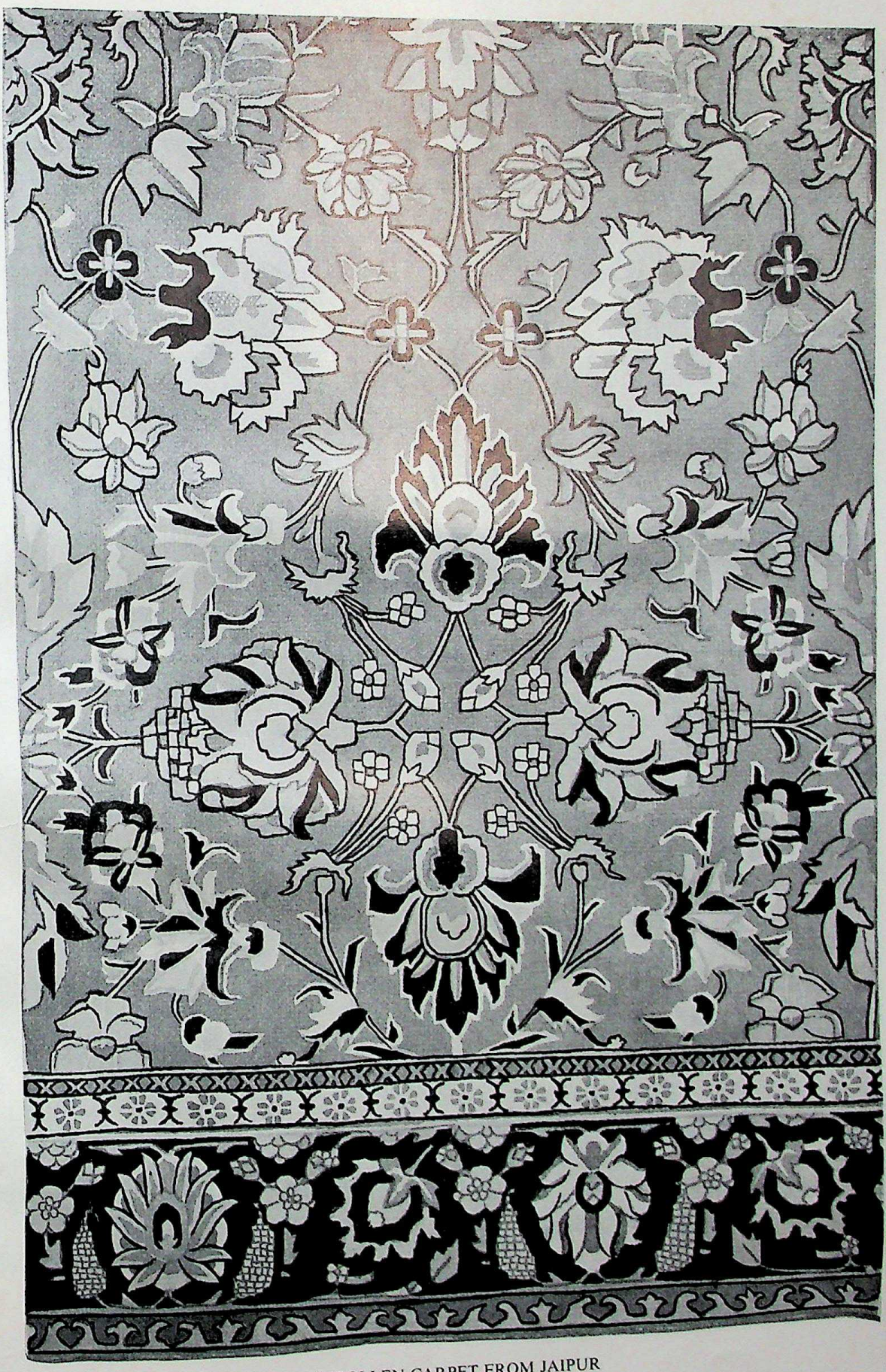

WOOLLEN CARPET FROM JAIPUR
(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. XI)

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WOOLLEN PILE CARPET FROM VELLORE, SOUTH INDIA
(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. XI)

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

WOOLLEN PILE CARPET FROM SRINAGAR, KASHMIR
(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. XI)

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WOOLLEN PILE CARPET FROM MIRZAPUR
(From *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. XI)

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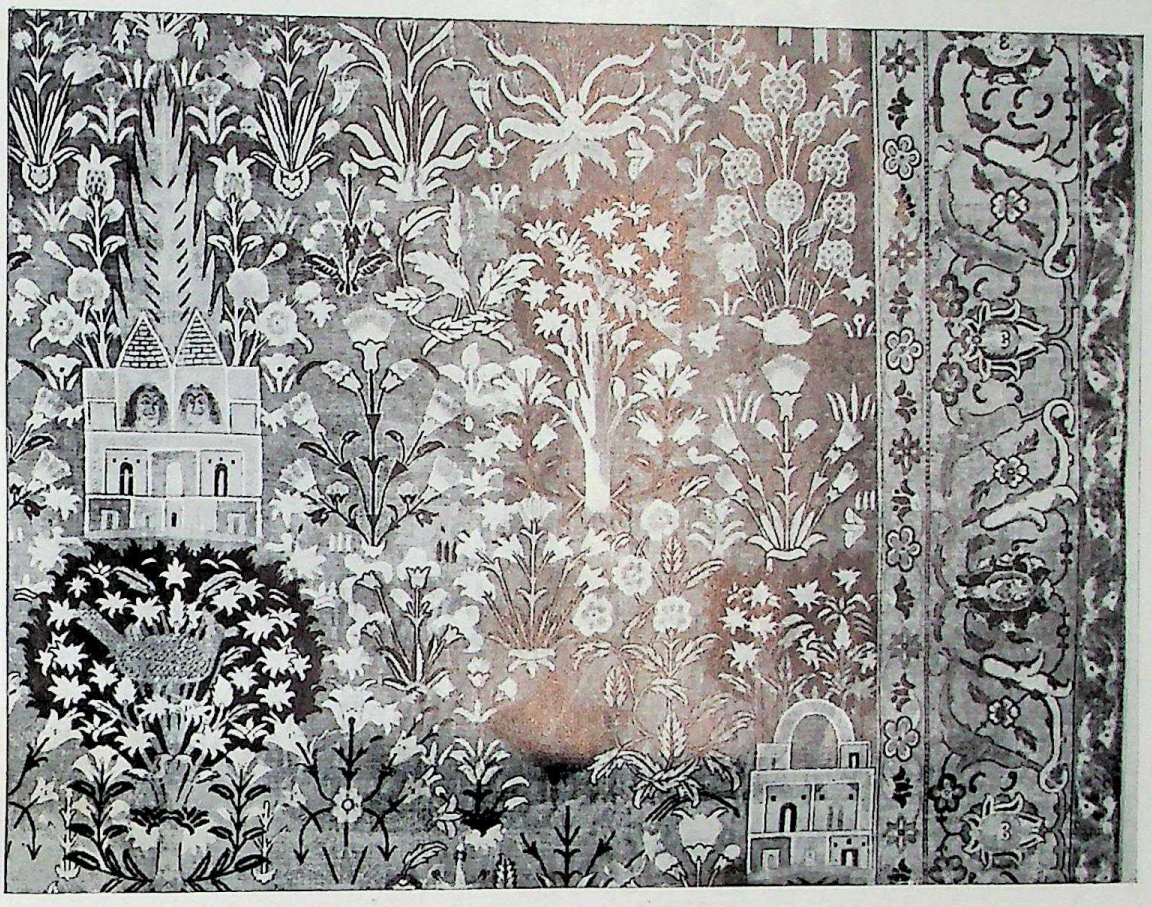
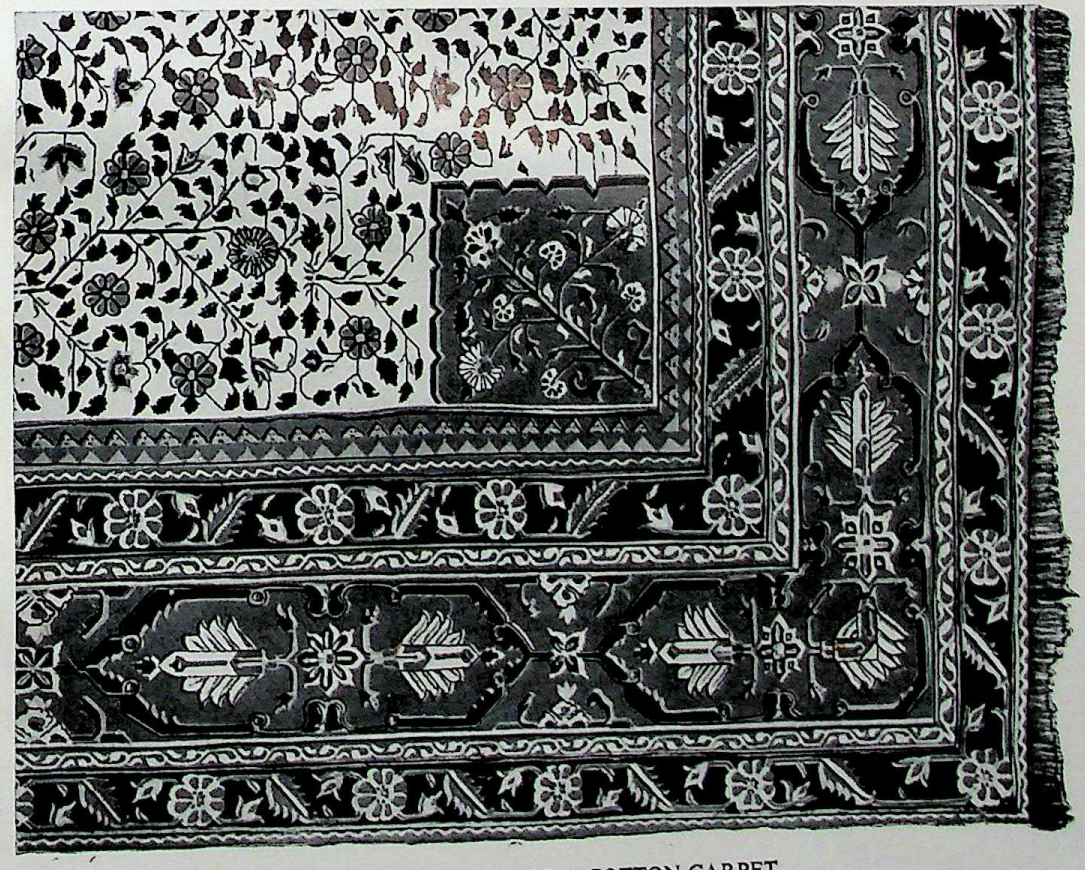


FRAGMENT OF SILK CARPET. CENTRAL INDIA, 18TH CENTURY
(Courtesy, *State Hermitage*, U.S.S.R.)



A FINE EXAMPLE OF A COTTON CARPET
(From *The Textile Manufacturers and Costumes of India* by F. Forbes Watson)

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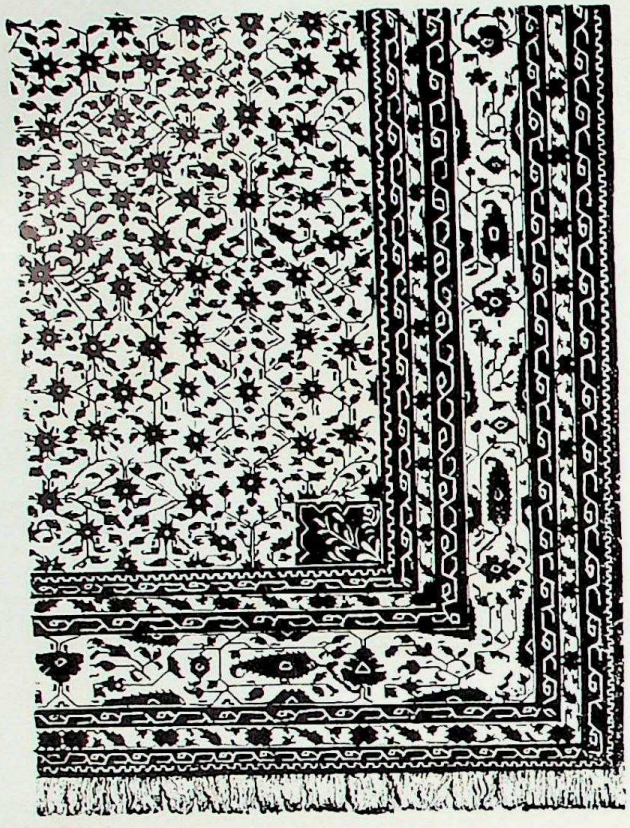

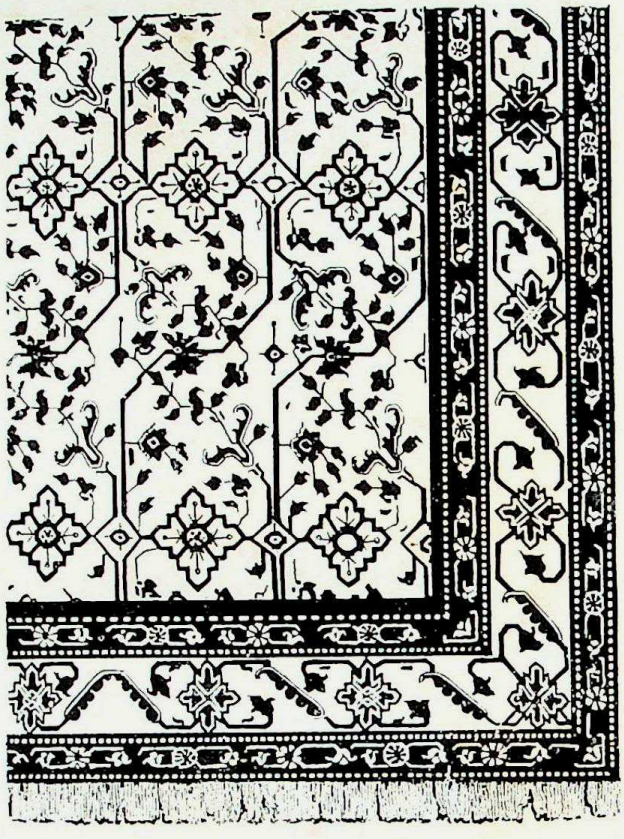

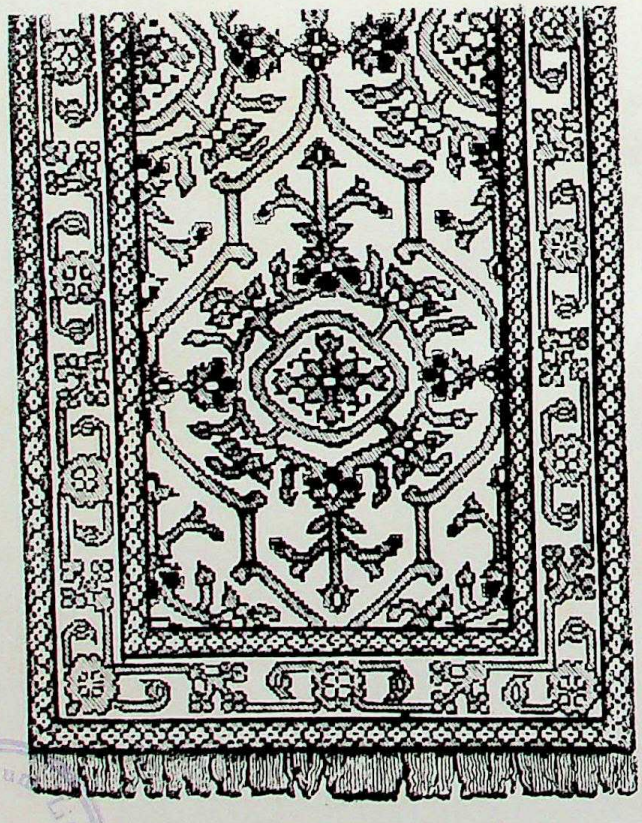

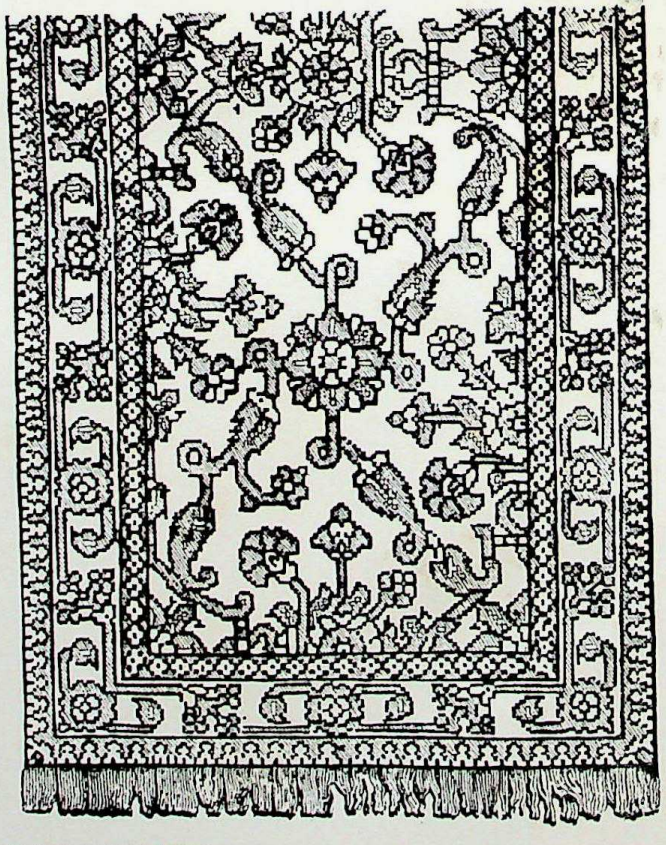

State Museum Lucknow

SECTIONS OF FOUR INDIAN CARPETS

(From *The Textile Manufacturers and the Costumes of the People of India*, by J. Forbes Watson)

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CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh